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978 Indian students return from violence-hit B'desh

MEA says more than 4,000 students are still in Bangladesh

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

A total of 778 Indian students have returned to India from Bangladesh through various land transit points, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Saturday as the neighbouring country continued to reel under deadly clashes over a controversial job-quota system.

Additionally, around 200 students have returned home by regular flight services through Dhaka and Chittagong airports, the MEA said in a statement. This takes the number up to 978.

Indian missions in Bangladesh are in regular touch with the authorities concerned to ensure the safety and security of Indian nationals and students, the MEA said.

Students from Nepal and Bhutan have also been assisted with their crossing **PHOTO: PTI**

Bangladesh is reeling under deadly clashes, with protesting students demanding that the Sheikh Hasina-led government scrap the controversial job-quota system.

More than 100 people have been killed in the clashes that broke out weeks ago. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal on Friday said the total number of Indian nationals in Bangladesh is estimated to be around 15,000. "In coordination with the local authorities, measures are being taken by the High Commission and the Assistant High Commissions to facilitate safe travel to the border crossing points along the India-Bangladesh international border," it said. The MEA said the Indian High Commission and assistant high commissions are in regular touch with more than 4,000 students remaining in various universities in Bangladesh and are providing necessary assistance. Students from Nepal and Bhutan have also been assisted with their crossing into India on request, it said.

—PTI

Himachal suffers ₹329 crore loss, 40 killed in monsoon

SHIMLA, 20 JULY

As many as 40 people died in rain-related incidents in Himachal Pradesh since the onset of monsoon on 27 June till 20 July and the State has suffered losses to the tune of Rs 329 crore, State emergency operation centre. The local MeT office on Saturday warned of moderate flash floods risk in few areas in Sirmaur and Shimla districts in the next 24 hours and issued an orange warning of heavy to very heavy rains, thunderstorms and lightning at isolated areas in the State on 23 July. It also issued yellow warning of heavy rains at isolated areas in the State on 21, 22, 24 and 25 July. Meanwhile, intermittent rains lashed a few parts of the state in past 24 hours and Nahan in Sirmaur district with 60.4mm. *—PTI*

14-yr-old infected with Nipah in Kerala

MALAPPURAM, 20 JULY

Kerala Health Minister Veena George on Saturday confirmed Nipah infection in a 14-year-old boy from Malappuram district. George, said the Pune NIV (National Institute of Virology) had confirmed the infection in the boy who is currently under treatment at a private hospital. "He will be shifted to the government medical college at Kozhikode. The contact tracing has begun. High-risk contacts have already been isolated and their samples have been sent for testing," she said. The child is under treatment and is on a ventilator, she said. *—PTI*

Tomato prices soar to ₹100 per kg in Delhi amid rains

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Tomato prices soared to Rs 100 per kg in retail markets of the national capital on Saturday as adverse weather conditions in various parts of the country continue to affect supplies of the essential kitchen staple. Tomatoes are available at Rs 100 per kg at Mother Dairy's retail outlets, Safal, in the national capital. According to the data compiled by the Department of Consumer Affairs, retail prices of tomatoes in Delhi are ruling at Rs 93 per kg on Saturday. The all-India average price of tomatoes is Rs 73.76 per kg as per the government data. A senior official from the department had last week attributed the sharp rise in prices to disruption in supplies caused by extreme heat followed by spells of excess rainfall. *—PTI*

COAST GUARD TO THE RESCUE

A fire erupted on a cargo ship, Maersk Frankfurt, off Karnataka's Karwar coast. Indian Coast Guard battled the flames for over 24 hours before bringing it under control. Tragically, one of the 21 crew members is missing. The ship was carrying dangerous cargo, including benzene and sodium cyanate, which required extra caution during firefighting on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

UPSC chairman Manoj Soni resigns

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

UPSC chairman Manoj Soni has resigned citing personal reasons before the expiry of his tenure in May 2029, official sources said on Saturday.

His resignation is "not in any way connected to controversies and allegations surrounding the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) after probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar issue came to the fore," they said.

"The UPSC chairman had tendered his resignation citing personal reasons over a fortnight back. It is yet to be accepted," a source said.

Eminent educationist Soni, 59, took over as a member of the Commission on 28 June, 2017. He took oath as the UPSC chairman on 16 May, 2023 and his term was to end on 15 May, 2029. Sources said Soni was not keen on becoming the UPSC chairman and had requested to be relieved. However, his request was not accepted then, the sources said. The development assumes significance as the UPSC on Friday said it has lodged a criminal case against Khedkar for faking her identity to fraudulently avail attempts in the civil services examination beyond eligibility, and taken steps to debar her from future selections.

Manoj Soni **PHOTO: PTI**

- UPSC chairman had tendered his resignation citing personal reasons over a fortnight back.

A scholar of political science with specialisation in international relations, Soni taught international relations at Sardar Patel University (SPU), Vallabh Vidyanagar between 1991 and 2016, except for the period when he served as Vice-Chancellor of the two universities.

UPSC is headed by a chairman and can have a maximum of ten members. At present, there are seven members in the UPSC, three less than its sanctioned strength.

—PTI

India agrees to give ₹1,500 cr aid to Bhutan in 18 months

THIMPHU, 20 JULY

India has agreed to positively consider providing Rs 1,500 crore to Bhutan as part of the Economic Stimulus Programme in the next 18 months, the two governments said on Saturday at the end of Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's visit and his wide-ranging talks with the Himalayan nation's leadership.

Misri, who was on his first foreign visit within days of his taking charge last week, reviewed the implementation modalities and cooperation in diverse areas of the India-Bhutan development partnership with his Bhutanese counterpart Aum Pema Choden.

The joint press release highlighted the exemplary partnership characterised by trust, goodwill and mutual understanding at all levels, strong bonds of friendship and close people-to-people contacts and said, the two sides held wide-ranging discussions on all aspects of bilateral cooperation.

The issues covered under the bilateral cooperation include development partnership, energy, trade and investment, connectivity and trade infrastructure, technology, people-to-people ties, as well as other regional issues of mutual importance, the joint press release issued by New Delhi and Thimphu said.

—PTI

REVISED NEET RESULTS

682 highest for H'yana centre that saw 6 full marks

The scores were revised after a retest was ordered by Supreme Court following allegations of inflation of marks **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

No NEET-UG candidate has scored above 682 in the revised results for a centre in Haryana that was under the scanner after six aspirants who took the medical entrance exam on 5 May got 720 out of 720.

The scores were revised after a retest was ordered by the Supreme Court following allegations of inflation of marks due to grace being awarded.

Over 240-UG candidates who appeared for the medical entrance test at a centre in Gujarat's Rajkot have scored more than 600 marks, with 11 of them getting 700 and above, and one a perfect 720.

Among the candidates who appeared for the NEET-UG at the Rajkot-based School of Engineering, RK University, test centre, 12 scored 700 and above -- one got 720, two got 710, four got 705, one got 704, one got 701 and three scored 700.

More than 240 aspirants who took the exam at the centre scored more than 600 marks. Of them, the score of 148 candidates was above 650 but below 700.

In Rajasthan's Sikar, more than 150 candidates from a centre have scored above 600 marks but below 700. The marks of 83 from another centre in Sikar was also above 600 but below 700.

The scores were revised after a retest was ordered by the Supreme Court following allegations of inflation of marks due to grace being awarded.

Only 13 candidates of the centre managed to score more than 600 marks, according to the centre-wise results.

The results of the 5 May exam, which were initially announced on 4 June, have been published in this centre-wise format following an order of the top court.

—PTI

NEET leak: CBI nabs 2 solvers mastermind

CBI Saturday arrested one of the masterminds, a B.Tech graduate from NIT-Jamshedpur, in the NEET-UG paper leak case and two MBBS students who allegedly acted as "solvers", officials said. With the fresh arrests, the total number of people held so far by the agency has now reached 21, they said. The two MBBS students arrested on Saturday are from a medical school in Bharatpur, Rajasthan. MBBS student Kumar Mangalam Bishnoi and first-year student Deepender Sharma were present in Hazaribagh in 5 May NEET examination.

BJP TO BRING OUT WHITE PAPER FOR J'KHAND TRIBALS

RANCHI, 20 JULY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday claimed that rampant infiltration has led to the shrinking of the tribal population in Jharkhand, and said that if BJP forms the government in the state, it will bring out a 'White Paper' on demography to protect their lands and rights.

BJP is confident of forming a government in Jharkhand as the lotus has already bloomed in 52 of 81 assembly segments in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Shah said while addressing party workers at Prabhat Tara Ground here during the saffron party's extended executive committee meeting.

"After forming a government in Jharkhand, we will bring out a 'White Paper' on demography to protect tribal people, their lands, reservation and rights," Shah said. Without naming Hemant Soren, he alleged that Jharkhand's tribal CM was instrumental behind "Love Jihad" and "Land-Jihad" in the state due to his "vote bank and appeasement policy". *—PTI*

Parl's Monsoon Session to begin on 22 July

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget on Tuesday as the Monsoon Session of Parliament gets underway next week with the united Opposition set to corner the NDA government on issues ranging from the NEET paper leak case and railway safety.

The Monsoon Session begins on Monday and will have 19 sittings till 12 August when the government is expected to present six bills, including the one to replace the 90-year-old Aircraft Act, and also get the Parliament nod for the budget of Jammu and Kashmir.

The government is likely to bring amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and other laws such as Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970, and the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1980 in the Budget Session due to which the government's shareholding in PSBs can go down below 51 per cent.

Besides the Finance Bill, the government has also listed The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill for introduction, consideration and passing.

The other bills listed for introduction and passage during the session are the Boilers Bill to replace the pre-Independence era law, the Coffee (Promotion and Development) Bill and the Rubber (Promotion and Development) Bill. *—PTI*

'NOT AN OFFENCE'

K'taka HC retracts child pornography verdict

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

Karnataka High Court has retracted its 10 July order that had previously ruled that an individual viewing child pornography online could not be prosecuted under Section 67B of the Information Technology Act.

The revision came after the court's single judge bench, led by Justice M Nagaprasanna, on Friday acknowledged an oversight regarding Section 67B(b) of the Act.

Initially, the court had dismissed charges against Inayathulla N, arguing that merely accessing pornographic content did not constitute "publishing or transmitting material," a requirement under Section 67B. However, upon a recall application filed by the state government, the court realised that its earlier ruling had neglected Section 67B(b). This section stipulates that creating, collecting, seeking, browsing, downloading, advertising, promoting, exchanging, or distributing material that depicts children in an obscene or sexually explicit manner falls under the purview of Section 67B.

PHOTO: PTI

- Emphasising the human fallibility of judges, the court noted, "Judges are also humans, and infallibility is not known to humanity." The court then permitted further investigation into the case and annulled its previous order

The court rejected arguments from the petitioner's counsel, who claimed that the recall was barred by Section 362 of the CrPC. Instead, the court maintained that its inherent powers under Section 482 of the CrPC allowed for such a revision.

Emphasising the human fallibility of judges, the court noted, "Judges are also humans, and infallibility is not known to humanity."

The court then permitted further investigation into the case and annulled its previous order that had quashed the proceedings. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

East Traffic Division files 221 cases for traffic violation

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

East Division of Bengaluru Traffic Police addressed numerous complaints received on social media and cracked down on traffic violations on Saturday. The traffic police filed 65 cases for illegal parking at bus stands, 109 cases for defective or missing registration plates, 25 cases against auto drivers for refusing rides, 22 cases against auto drivers for not wearing uniforms and 53 cases for high beam lights. A total of 274 cases were registered on the day with a fine amount totalling Rs.1.36 lakh collected from the offenders.

In a parallel effort, East Traffic Division also conducted a drive on Friday, targeting motorists with illegal modifications and violations. They checked around 150 vehicles and filed 53 cases for installing illegal lights; fines totalling Rs 26,500 were collected on the spot. *—Salar News*

Renukaswamy case accused's mother dies

CHITRADURGA, 20 JULY

The mother of one of the accused in the Renukaswamy murder case passed away on Saturday, sources said. Manjulamma, 70, mother of Raghavendra, has been ailing for the past one year. She went into depression ever since her son was arrested. Kannada film actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and his friend Pavithra Gowda are the key accused and are in jail. Along with them, 15 others have also been arrested. Raghavendra had allegedly played a key role in abducting Darshan's fan Renukaswamy from Chitradurga on 8 June and bringing him to Bengalrur where he was tortured to death on 9 June for allegedly sending obscene messages to Pavithra. Police arrested Darshan and Pavithra on 11 June. Raghavendra's family members have appealed to the jail officials to allow him to take part in Manjulamma's last rites. *—PTI*

Move magistrate court for home food: HC to Darshan

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

The High Court has directed Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, who is an accused in the Renukaswamy murder case, to move the magistrate court with the plea for home food, bed, and clothes while in prison. The court directed Darshan's counsel to submit the application to the magistrate by Saturday, who is to make a decision by 26 July. Justice SR Krishna Kumar gave the direction on Friday and postponed the hearing to 29 July, on Darshan's petition. Previously, the prosecution had objected, arguing that Darshan should first appeal to the Inspector General of Prisons for home food and, if denied, only then approach the magistrate. Darshan was arrested on 11 June on charges of assault and murder of his fan Renukaswamy from Chitradurga for allegedly sending obscene messages to his friend Pavithra Gowda on social media. Pavithra is also a key accused. *—PTI*

Govt schools students to get eggs 6 days a week

Azim Premji Foundation signs MoU with govt on mid-day meal

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

Students of government schools in Karnataka will now be served eggs six days a week as a part of the midday meal scheme.

The move comes after Azim Premji Foundation on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government to support the nutritional enrichment of the State government's mid-day meal programme in government and government-aided schools for three years.

Currently, the state government's mid-day meal programme provides eggs on two days of the week to the students.

"An alternative high nutrition supplement will be provided for those students who do not consume eggs because of cultural preferences, the foundation said.

CM Siddaramaiah with industrialist Azim Premji during the inauguration of a mid-day meal scheme, in Bengaluru on Saturday. PHOTO: PTI

Speaking after inaugurated the programme, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah lauded the Azim Premji Foundation for its "historic" initiative to provide nutritious meals to school children and stressed that quality food is important for mental health and good education.

According to him, MoU was signed between Primary and Secondary Education Department with the Azim Premji Foundation.

As per the MoU, the foundation has agreed to supply eggs for four days in a week. One egg to each student -- both to government students and also to government aided schools.

According to the foundation, eggs will be added to the mid-day meal for the 55 lakh students in these schools -- from Grade 1 to 10. As is well-known, eggs are packed with a wide range of essential nutritional content from proteins to minerals.

—Salar News with agencies

BJP challenges Congress to probe scams during its rule

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

BJP unit in the State on Saturday challenged Congress government to order a probe into the '21 scams' that allegedly took place during the last five years, when the saffron party was in power.

BJP said Congress was "solely responsible" for the entire scam and asserted that Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was in "no way involved" even though the nationalised Union Bank of India, comes under the Union Finance Ministry.

The party accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of 'shielding' those involved in the Rs 187 crore scam in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation.

"The Chief Minister has said 21 scams have taken place during BJP rule. You have been in power for the past 15 months. Why did you take so much time to investigate these scams? We are ready for a probe," Leader of the Opposition Party (LoP) R Ashoka said.

He said, "The way Rs 88 crore of Valmiki Corporation was 'Khata-Khat' transferred to different bank accounts in Telangana, you should have 'Khata-Khat' investigated the allegations of irregularities against us."

Opposition leader R Ashoka blamed Siddaramaiah of trying to put blame on Valmiki Corporation to save B Nagendra. PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Ashoka, a former deputy chief minister, accused Siddaramaiah of trying to put the blame on Valmiki Corporation and Union Bank of India officials to save B Nagendra from the scam.

The alleged 'scam' came to light after the Accounts Superintendent of the Corporation Chandrasekharan P took his own life on 26 May.

In the suicide note, Chandrasekharan alleged that there was an illegal transfer of Rs 187 crore belonging to the Corporation to various accounts.

The Congress government constituted a Special Investigation Team, which has so far arrested 11 people.

The CBI is also probing the case after the Union Bank of India lodged a complaint with it regarding the illegal transfer of money. *—PTI*

DON'T HARASS RTI ACTIVISTS IN MUDA CASE: BJP

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

BJP has warned the State government that it will protest against any harassment of the Right to Information (RTI) activists who uncovered the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam in which the name of Chief Minister Siddaramiah allegedly figures.

Speaking to media people, State President of the BJP BY Vijayendra said, "Congress has the art of silencing, threatening and putting those behind bars who attempt to expose them and that it has a past dark history of implementing emergency."

He urged that RTI activists be granted adequate police protection and alleged that Congress members who could not silence the RTI activists are now resorting to putting pressure on them by using police.

Vijayendra alleged that RTI activists who are exposing the original documents related to the 14 plots acquired from MUDA in the name of Chief Minister's wife and those coming out with the details of the illegal purchase of Survey No.464 in Kesare land now have complaints lodged against them by the police.

Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel HD Kumaraswamy had also come down heavily on Congress in the MUDA case. *—Salar News*

ENTERTAINMENT TAX

State proposes 2% cess on movie tickets, OTT fees

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

State government proposed a new cess ranging from 1 to 2 per cent, on cinema tickets and Over-the-Top (OTT) subscription fees to support film and cultural workers.

This fee will fund social security benefits such as ESI and PF for cine artists and cultural performers under the Labour Ministry's Karnataka Cine and Cultural Activists (Welfare) Bill of 2024.

The Karnataka Cine and Cultural Workers (Welfare) Bill, 2024, was tabled in the Assembly on Friday. The Cess ranges from 1 per cent to 2 per cent, the exact rate of which will be decided by the government later.

Labour Department Secretary Mohammad Mohsin said he plans to extend the cess to theatrical plays performed in the State. The board will use the proceeds from the cess to support social security schemes for film workers.

The bill outlines the creation of a seven-member welfare board for cine workers and cultural activists, tasked with managing funds from the cess to support social security schemes.

The Karnataka Film Workers Artists and Technicians Union estimates that around 2,355 workers, including artists and technicians, are working in the industry. However, many small-time artists and technicians are not registered with any organisation in the state.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- This fee will fund social security benefits such as ESI and PF for cine artists and cultural performers under Karnataka Cine and Cultural Activists (Welfare) Bill of 2024

Mohsin said discussions are on whether OTT subscriptions will be included and focused on OTT productions from the local film industry.

As per the proposal tabled in the Assembly, each registered member will receive a unique ID card to avail benefits. There is some uncertainty about how cess will be levied on OTT subscriptions, which are generally managed through online platforms without local addresses. *—ANI*

CHECKMATE

Assembly Speaker UT Khader, MLA Ajay Singh and others play chess during a tournament for MLAs and MLCs, at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Saturday. PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

PROPERTY TAX

BBMP offers relief to educational bodies

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

In a welcome move for educational institutions struggling with financial burdens, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has introduced a one-time relief scheme for property tax dues.

Educational institutions entitled to property tax exemption can now pay a one-time service charge of 25 per cent on their arrears instead of the full amount. This applies from the date the government recognized the institution's property.

The relief scheme is valid until 31 July and institutions can avail the benefit by applying online through the Self Declaration System (SAS) or offline. Those facing difficulties with online payment can submit the dues via cheques, pay orders or demand draft after informing their respective zonal joint commissioners.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The scheme implemented under the BBMP act was announced during a meeting with representatives from medical and engineering colleges on Saturday and offers substantial exemptions on outstanding property tax. Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath urged the institutions to settle their outstanding amount through this scheme immediately.

—Salar News

Search on to find 3 missing in landslide

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

Rescue operations continued on Saturday in Shirur village in to locate three people, including a lorry driver from Kerala, who went missing following a massive landslide earlier this week.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is expected to visit the landslide site on Sunday to review the search operations.

Seven bodies have been recovered so far since the incident on 16 July, police said.

Equipment like ground penetrating radar and metal detectors are being employed to help with the rescue efforts, they said, adding heavy rains were hampering the search operations.

"We are doing everything possible to trace those reported to be missing. Our entire administration is at the spot, helicopters were also arranged, Navy is also coordinating the operation," Superintendent of Police (Karwar), Narayana M told PTI.

Asked about the missing lorry driver from Kerala, he said, "We are trying to trace the lorry. Even though (as per family's claim) GPS (global positioning system) location of the lorry was tracked to the area where the landslide occurred, we have not been able to trace the lorry yet.."

Meanwhile, Siddaramaiah said the landslide situation in Uttara Kannada is dire.

Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy on Saturday visited the landslide-hit area on Saturday afternoon and alleged that "unscientific work" has happened here, indicating it to be the cause of the incident. *—PTI*

Restoration work underway following a landslide on NH 66 near Shirur village in Ankola taluk, in Uttara Kannada on Saturday. PHOTO: ANI

There is delay in rescue, says driver's family

KOZHIKODE, 20 JULY

The family of the Malayalee lorry driver Arjun, who has been missing since 16 July after his truck was caught in a landslide in a village in Karnataka, on Saturday claimed there was a delay in the rescue operation being carried out there. His sister said police were informed on the day itself that he was missing, but till date there is no information available about him. *—PTI*

'AT HOME AMONG THE TREES'

Yelahanka residents form a human chain to protest against the chopping of trees for Suburban Rail Project, on Saturday. PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

RISE IN CASES

'Timely treatment key for Dengue Shock Syndrome'

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

- A 7-month pregnant woman succumbed to suspected dengue fever (DSS) in a private hospital in north Bengaluru on Thursday

The death of a pregnant woman due to suspected Dengue Shock Syndrome (DSS) in Bengaluru on Thursday has highlighted the need for timely treatment for Dengue Shock Syndrome (DSS) and Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (DHF).

"DHF and DSS can be life-threatening if not treated promptly," Dr Asima Banu, Principal of Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Kalasipalya, told Salar News.

DSS is marked by symptoms such as bleeding, blood plasma leakage, and a low platelet count, typically developing after the initial fever phase of DHF. It also includes severe abdominal pain, rapid breathing, fatigue and restlessness. "Patients with DSS often experience continuous vomiting and shock symptoms like rapid breathing and cold, clammy skin. A sudden drop in blood pressure is a common sign of DSS, which can lead to organ failure if not treated immediately," Chief Virologist Dr Banu said.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Severe cases of DSS can affect both adults and children. Dr Asha Benekappa, a paediatric consultant of Dr Chandramma Dayanda Sagar Institute of Medical Education and Research, Harohalli, highlighted the importance of early medical intervention for children. "Parents should seek medical help if their child with dengue fever shows symptoms like bleeding gums, rapid pulse, fatigue, or restlessness. Early detection and proper management can save lives," Dr Benekappa told Salar News.

192 dengue cases in one day

The City registered 192 cases from Friday evening to Saturday evening, according to Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike health department. The City recorded three deaths, bringing the total number of cases since January to 5,986.

—Salar News

PHOTO: PTI

ED makes 3rd arrest in 2021 paper leak case in Rajasthan

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said it has made a fresh and the third arrest in connection with its ongoing money-laundering probe into the alleged leak of the question paper for the Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers (REET) in 2021. Raju Ram Iram was taken into custody on Friday. ED had earlier arrested retired assistant professor Pradeep Parasher and his assistant, Ram Kripal Meena, in the case. Iram, had received the leaked paper of the REET-2021 from other accused and given it to his associates for distribution among candidates. The federal agency carried out multiple searches in connection with the case last year, "resulting in recovery of incriminating documents, records and seizure of huge cash". *—PTI*

AAP's Bharti moves HC against BJP MP Bansuri's election

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

AAP leader Somnath Bharti on Saturday approached Delhi High Court challenging BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj's election in Lok Sabha polls 2024 on the grounds of alleged corrupt practices. Justice Manmeet PS Arora is scheduled to hear the election petition on 22 July. The plea said while Bharti secured 3,74,815 votes, Swaraj got 4,53,185 votes as per the returning officer. They both contested from the New Delhi Parliamentary Constituency and Swaraj was declared as winner. The plea alleged that former AAP minister Raaj Kumar Anand, who was though a candidate set up by the Bahujan Samaj Party but in reality he was set up by Swaraj's party to help her against the petitioner. Anand contested the election on the ticket of Bahujan Samaj Party to help Swaraj and later on 10 July, he joined BJP. *—PTI*

HC asks Delhi to release ₹387 cr for hybrid hearings

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Delhi High Court has asked the city government's chief secretary to expedite a sanction of Rs 387 crore to facilitate hybrid hearings in 691 subordinate courts in the national capital and implement the project on priority basis. A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora, while dealing with a petition concerning infrastructure for hybrid hearings in district courts, clarified that a comprehensive tender for all the 691 courts should be floated. High Court also allowed Delhi government, represented through additional standing counsel Anuj Aggarwal, to initially set up two pilot courts per court complex instead of two pilot courts per district, which would be decided by the registrar general. *—PTI*

ED arrests Haryana Congress MLA in mining case

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Haryana Congress MLA Surender Panwar in an "illegal" mining-linked money-laundering case, official sources said on Saturday. He was taken into custody in the early hours in Gurugram. He will be produced before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Ambala where the central agency will seek a custodial remand, the sources said. The agency had raided the premises of the MLA in January on the charges of "large-scale illegal mining" in the Yamunanagar area of the state. The case stems from several FIRs registered by the Haryana Police for probing illegal mining. *—PTI*

Uddhav vows to scrap Dharavi revamp after win

Sena (UBT) Chief says, will not let Mumbai turn into Adani city

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday said the Dharavi slum redevelopment project tender awarded to industrialist Gautam Adani's firm will be scrapped if his party comes to power in Maharashtra.

Addressing a press conference, Thackeray said his party will ensure Dharavi residents and businesses are not uprooted, adding that people staying there must be given 500 square feet houses in the locality itself.

"We will scrap Dharavi slum redevelopment project tender after coming to power. The government should give an answer as to why it should not be scrapped now itself. We will not allow Mumbai to be turned into Adani city," the former chief minister said.

Additional concessions that are not specified in the contract are being given to the Adani Group in the project to redevelop Dharavi, one of the world's densest urban sprawls, Thackeray claimed.

Dharavi project has a revenue potential of Rs 20,000 crore PHOTO: ANI

Thackeray also took a dig at the government, and asked if it was planning to start a 'Ladka Mitra' (dear friend) scheme on the lines of 'Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana', which aims to give women a measly sum of Rs 1,500 per month.

Thackeray said the government was trying to procure land under the slum rehabilitation scheme for rehabilitating the residents of Dharavi.

The government has initiated the process of procuring 20 such plots in the city, which are meant for infrastructure works or development related plans, the former chief minister said.

The Dharavi project, which reportedly has a revenue potential of Rs 20,000 crore, involves rebuilding the massive slum sprawl in central Mumbai, located near the BKC business district.

The tender was awarded to Adani Properties in November 2022 after a competitive bidding that also saw realty major DLF and Naman Developers taking part. *—PTI*

Oppn, Muslim body flay BJP over hotel tag order

Kanwariyas raise slogans during the 'Kanwar Yatra' PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Saturday slammed as "divisive agenda" the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments' order to all eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display their owners' names and demanded that it should be withdrawn.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind chief Maulana Arshad Madani slammed as "discriminatory and communal" Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments' order and said the Muslim body will examine the legality of the directive.

All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi said that this "visceral hatred" is due to political parties or leaders of Hindutva and those parties who call themselves "secular".

"Fear on UP's Kanwar routes: This is The reality of hatred for Indian Muslims, credit for this visceral hatred goes to political parties /leaders of Hindutva and so-called lip servicing Secular parties," Owaisi said in a post on 'X', sharing a photo of an egg stall displaying name of its owner.

Launching a vitriolic attack on the BJP, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said it has already become evident that the BJP government is "trampling" the Constitution which guarantees equal rights and justice to everyone without any discrimination on the basis of religion or name.

Kanwariyas vandalise dhaba after being served onion & garlic

A group of Kanwariyas allegedly vandalised a dhaba in UP's Muzaffarnagar reportedly after being served food with onion and garlic. The incident took place on Friday. *—PTI/ANI*

Make owners display names: BJP to MP govt

INDORE, 20 JULY

BJP MLA from Indore-2 assembly constituency, Ramesh Mendola has written a letter to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav requesting to make rules to display shopkeeper's name in front of every shop in the state. MLA Mendola also shared a copy of his letter on his X handle writing that the name of any one is its identity and the person is proud of his name. Asking for the name is the right of customer and shopkeepers should be proud to tell.

There should be only one name plate on every shop: 'HUMANITY'
—Sonu Sood, Actor

Agree, Halal should be replaced with 'HUMANITY'
—Kangana Ranaut, BJP MP

NEW ZEALAND PM DIALS MODI, SEEKS DEEPER TIES

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a congratulatory call from his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon on his re-election as the two leaders agreed to advance their bilateral ties in sectors such as trade and economic cooperation, animal husbandry, pharmaceuticals, education and space among others.

Modi's office said in a statement on Saturday that both leaders noted that India-New Zealand relationship is anchored in shared democratic values and close people-to-people ties, reiterating their firm commitment to take bilateral cooperation to new heights in the years to come.

He later posted on X, "I thank Prime Minister Christopher Luxon for his call and warm felicitations. Reiterated our firm commitment to take forward India-New Zealand ties, which are rooted in shared democratic values and people-to-people ties. Appreciate his efforts towards the security and well-being of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand." *—PTI*

Narendra Modi PHOTO: PTI

PARL SESSION REMINDER

Monsoon session will be held from 22 July to 12 August PHOTO: PTI

MPs asked not to criticise rulings by chairs

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Rulings given by the chair should not be criticised directly or indirectly in or outside the House and members should not raise slogans, including "Vande Mataram" and "Jai Hind", MPs have been reminded ahead of the Parliament session beginning Monday.

The members have also been reminded that displaying "exhibits" on the floor of the House is "not in order".

Rajya Sabha Secretariat has come out with excerpts from the "Handbook for Members of Rajya Sabha", drawing the attention of the members to parliamentary customs and conventions and parliamentary etiquette.

The session begins on 22 July and is slated to conclude on 12 August.

"The decorum and the seriousness of the proceedings of the House require that there should be no 'thanks', 'thank you', 'Jai Hind', 'Vande Mataram' or any other slogans raised in the House," the bulletin said.

It noted that rulings are given by the chair according to the precedents of the House, and where there is no precedent, the usual parliamentary practice is followed.

Referring to parliamentary etiquette, it said words containing insinuations, offensive and unparliamentary expressions should be scrupulously avoided.

It also said every member should "bow to the Chair" while entering or leaving the House as also before taking or leaving the seat.

When any member offers a criticism of another member or a minister, it observed that the latter is entitled to expect that critic should be present to hear his or her reply. *—PTI*

AAP launches 'Kejriwal's guarantees' for Haryana

CHANDIGARH, 20 JULY

Arvind Kejriwal PHOTO: PTI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal on Saturday launched five "Kejriwal's guarantees" for poll-bound Haryana, promising free electricity, free medical treatment, free education to people, Rs 1,000 per month to every woman in the state and employment for youngsters.

Besides Sunita Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Sanjay Singh and Sandeep Pathak were also present during the launch of "Kejriwal ki five guarantees" in Panchkula.

Speaking about Kejriwal's "guarantees", she said there will be free electricity for domestic category and there will be round-the-clock electricity in the state if her party is voted to power.

"Like in Delhi and Punjab, there will be 'mohalla clinics' in cities and villages. The condition of government hospitals will be improved and there will be free and good treatment for everyone," she said.

The condition of government schools will also be improved where good and free education will be provided, she added.

"Each woman will get Rs 1,000 per month," she said. "It will soon be implemented in Delhi and Punjab, she added.

She said AAP will give employment to each unemployed youth.

AAP has promised free medicine and medical tests, saying it will provide relief to people from inflation. It has also promised to end the "education mafia". *—PTI*

My elevation as DyCM are rumors: Udhayanidhi

CHENNAI, 20 JULY

Tamil Nadu Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Saturday played down reports of his possible elevation as Deputy Chief Minister and said Chief Minister MK Stalin has to take a call on the issue.

In a brief chat with reporters here, he said, "it is the Chief Minister who has to decide."

Udhayanidhi was responding to a question about reports indicating that he is likely to be elevated soon.

Earlier addressing the 45th foundation day of the DMK youth wing here, Udhayanidhi who is the Youth Welfare and Sports Development Minister, said the post of secretary of the party's youth wing which he held, was close to his heart.

"When media persons ask about the speculation about my elevation as deputy Chief Minister I tell them that all the state Ministers and office-bearers of the party and youth wing are functioning as deputies to the Chief Minister," he said.

His primary commitment remained as the party's youth wing secretary he said and added "whatever the post, according to me, the youth wing secretary post is close to my heart." *—PTI*

'FIGHT IN PARL'

Editors Guild writes to RaGa over press freedom

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The Editors Guild of India on Saturday sought Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's support in raising issues of press freedom and right to information in Parliament and claimed the government has taken several legislative steps to regulate and control the media.

In a letter to Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Guild expressed concerns on legislative measures taken to control the media -- print, broadcast and digital.

It said a general concern about these legislative measures was that they were taken without adequate stakeholder consultation and parliamentary scrutiny in the drafting and passing of these laws.

The Guild said there were inadequate safeguards for press independence and freedom of expression. *—PTI*

Kejri resorting to 'willful low-calorie intake': LG

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena has alleged that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is lodged in Tihar jail under judicial custody, may deliberately not be taking medical diet and medicines prescribed to him, according to a Raj Niwas communication.

LG in a letter to Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar cited a report by Superintendent (Prison) regarding the health status of Kejriwal, to allege that there were several instances of "willful low calorie intake" by the CM, despite sufficient home cooked food being provided to him.

Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday assailed Lt Governor VK Saxena's communication for allegedly insinuating that Kejriwal was "deliberately" making himself sick and accused BJP of hatching a "sinister plan to kill" AAP leader.

According to LG's letter, the diet monitoring chart indicates that between 6 June and 13 July, CM did not fully consume the prescribed diet for all three meals of the day. *—PTI*

Chirag Paswan backs caste census but with a warning

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Union minister and LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan has pitched for a nationwide caste census but warned against making the figures public as it will lead to "division" in society, and said no discussion within the ruling NDA has taken place so far over simultaneous polls and the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), both part of the BJP's manifesto.

In an interaction with PTI editors, he flagged concerns about the UCC and said he cannot take a position unless a draft on it is placed before him. He, however, asserted that his Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) strongly supports the concept of simultaneous polls. Be it language, culture or lifestyle, everything is different in different regions of the country, he said, wondering "how can you bring everyone under one umbrella".

Paswan said the caste census should be part of the next census as specific data is often needed for adequate allocation of money for community-based development schemes. Courts also at times seek population data of different castes, he added.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said last year that census and delimitation will happen immediately after the new government comes to power.

Asked if it will be possible for the NDA government, which has retained power with a reduced majority, to bring in the provisions for holding simultaneous polls in the country, Paswan said, "Yes, of course. Why not?" *—PTI*

AFTER SUVENDU'S REMARKS

'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' divides WB BJP

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

BJP's Minority Morcha national president, Jamal Siddiqui, has said that 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' (development and trust for all) is the soul of BJP.

He further said that just as a body is useless without a soul, the BJP is nothing without 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'.

Speaking with ANI, Siddiqui shared his views on a comment made by West Bengal BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari. He said that Adhikari's statement, "Jo humare saath, hum unke saath," was made impulsively.

"Suvendu Adhikari's statement was made in a moment of emotional distress and disappointment, but the BJP doesn't operate on such emotional impulses and instead focuses on taking everyone along, regardless of their political affiliations," he added.

Leader of Opposition in Bengal Assembly Suvendu Adhikari PHOTO: PTI

Accusing the INDIA bloc of misleading minorities, BJP leader said, "There is a lack of education in Muslim society, and we (the BJP) also have small shortcomings. We, the people of the Minority Morcha, are part of society and couldn't explain our thoughts and ideas well to them. INDIA bloc misled them; they are like hungry wolves who only want power, and that's why they (Muslims) got confused and went astray."

The Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, said that BJP "should now stop "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas."

Suvendu Adhikari asserted that the "time has come when the party should prioritise those who support them." During the event, he also chanted "Jai Shri Ram" and declared his intention to "protect Hindus and Constitution." *—ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

Naxal gunned down by security in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR, 20 JULY

A Naxalite was killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Saturday, police said. The encounter took place in a jungle area on a hill near Tumar Gatta and Singavaram villages under Jagargunda police station limits in the morning when a team of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, a senior official said. The operation was launched on Friday night following inputs about the presence of Maoists belonging to their Jagargunda area committee, he said. A search operation was still underway in the area, he added. With this incident, 142 Naxalites were gunned down by security forces in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year, police said. *—PTI*

2 jawans die due to heat during Pak border patrol

AHMEDABAD, 20 JULY

A Border Security Force officer and a jawan died during patrol due to "extreme" weather exposure at the 'Harami Nallah' creek area along the India-Pakistan international front in Gujarat, the force said Saturday. The incident, in which Assistant Commandant Vishwa Deo and Head Constable Dayal Ram are stated to have suffered a heat stroke and dehydration, took place on Friday along the border, the sources said. The officer belonged to the 59th battalion of the BSF. Officials said the two BSF men were rushed to a health facility in Bhuj by the evening but could not be saved. The current temperatures in the Rann of Kutch and Harami Nallah areas is ranging from 34-36 degrees with humidity levels as high as 80-82 per cent. *—PTI*

Woman dead after building's balcony crashes in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

A woman was killed and three others were injured after some portion of a balcony of a four-storey residential building located on Grant Road in south Mumbai came crashing down on Saturday, officials said. The building, Rubinnisa Manzil, where the incident occurred is located on Sleater road near the Grant Road railway station, a fire brigade official said. The incident took place around 11 am, he said. It is an old building of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) that was declared dangerous by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), he said, adding that a notice had also been issued to it earlier. *—PTI*

Central school on IIT Indore campus gets bomb threat

INDORE, 20 JULY

A central school located on the campus of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Indore has received an email threatening to "blow up" the school building on Independence Day, police said on Saturday. The central school, PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, received the email on Friday evening and a complaint was made at Simrol police station on Saturday morning, an official said. Deputy Superintendent of Police (Headquarters) Umakant Chowdhry said, "As per the complaint received at Simrol police station, the email was sent from an ID named after Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and was sent at the official email address of the school." He said that the sender threatened to blow up the school campus on August 15 (Independence Day). Police have launched a probe into it, the official said. *—PTI*

Probe hints at faulty tracks in UP train accident

Rly dubs probe blaming improper fastening of tracks as premature

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

A five-member team of senior railway officials investigating the derailment of Chandigarh-Dibrugarh Express has blamed improper fastening of the rail track for the accident, sources said.

All the same, the Chief Public Relations Officer of the North Eastern Railway Zone, under which the accident site comes, told PTI that arriving at any conclusion based on the joint probe report was incorrect and premature.

Four people were killed and several injured on Thursday in the derailment of Chandigarh-Dibrugarh Express (Train no 15904) between Motiganj and Jhilahi railway stations near Gonda in Uttar Pradesh.

The investigation team's report said that the senior section engineer at the Lucknow division, under which the section comes, detected an IMR defect (immediate removal defect) at 1.30 pm and the Chandigarh-Dibrugarh Express crossed Motiganj station at 2.28 pm.

According to the report, the derailment happened at 2.31 pm when the engine crossed the defective spot *PHOTO: PTI*

It said that at 2.30 pm, the station master of Motiganj was given a memorandum to put a speed restriction of 30 kmph for trains to cross the defective spot.

According to the report, the derailment happened at 2.31 pm when the engine crossed the defective spot.

"When IMR was detected (at 1.30 pm), the site should have been protected till the caution order was served but it was not done due to which the train derailed. The engineering department is responsible for it," the joint probe said.

A senior railway officer representing the engineering department wrote, "I completely disagree with the joint note," and cited several reasons, one of them being the measurement of the track, as he alleged improper fastening was done in his absence.

The officer said that it was incorrect to conclude that the site was not protected because the IMR spot was completely fine and it was not the reason for the derailment.

The officer concluded that the train derailed because of improper braking by the loco pilot.

The joint probe team provided the details of the accident as recorded in the statement of the train crew.

It said that the loco pilot started from Motiganj Station at 2.28 pm at the speed of 25 kmph and while crossing KM no 638/12 (the defective spot) at 80 km speed, he experienced a strong jerk followed by a rattling sound, after which he applied an emergency break.

The loco pilot told the probe team that when the engine was stopped and when he looked back, he saw the derailment of coaches amid a heap of dust. *—PTI*

POST MICROSOFT OUTAGE

Airline systems across airports return to normal

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

Airline systems across airports, which were impacted due to a global IT outage on Friday, have started working normally, and all issues are likely to be resolved by noon on Saturday, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said.

"Since 3am (Saturday), airline systems across airports have started working normally. Flight operations are going smoothly now," Naidu said in a statement.

However, in Chennai nearly six to eight flights in the domestic sector were cancelled on Saturday following the Microsoft outage that led to significant disruptions to airline operations, airport authorities said. On Friday, in one of the biggest-ever IT outages, an update of a product offered by global cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike triggered problems with Microsoft's Windows across the planet, hitting operations at financial sector companies and airlines while hospital operations got postponed and some television channels went off air. Airports across the country witnessed chaotic scenes after the online passenger booking, reservation and boarding systems turned to manual mode due to the outage, resulting in higher passenger handling processing time and consequently hundreds of flights were delayed and many cancelled. There is a backlog because of disruptions on Friday, and it is getting cleared gradually, according to the statement. The reservation and check-in systems of most of the airlines, including IndiGo, SpiceJet, Akasa and Air India Express, are now operational, according to a source. *—PTI*

K Rammohan Naidu *PHOTO:PTI*

Flash floods in UP; heavy rains batter Odisha, M'rashtra

BAHRAICH
BHUBANESWAR/
MUMBAI, 20 JULY

Rescue teams evacuated over 100 villagers who were stranded in flash floods after Nepal released an "excessive" amount of water that resulted in flooding in Ghaghra river here, officials said on Saturday.

The residents of Chahalwa village, close to India-Nepal border, were stranded in the agricultural fields situated on the other side of river Ghaghra near the border, they said.

At the same time, the depression over Bay of Bengal crossed the Odisha coast near Chilika Lake on Saturday, triggering heavy rain in parts of the state as the IMD forecast more downpour in the next five days.

Isolated heavy rainfall may continue in the state over the next five days, the IMD bulletin said.

IMD predicted heavy rainfall, with the possibility of extremely heavy showers at isolated places in Nagpur and other districts of Vidarbha region over the next two days.

It issued a red alert for Chandrapur, and an orange alert for Nagpur, Amravati and Wardha districts for Saturday.

Incessant rains led to waterlogging in several areas of Nagpur city. Two bridges in rural parts of the district got submerged. Meanwhile, Mumbai and its suburbs received intermittent heavy spells of rain on Saturday, which led to waterlogging in some areas, but the local trains are operating normally, officials said. IMD said Mumbai received 91 mm rainfall in the 24-hour period ending 8 am on Saturday, while its eastern and western suburbs recorded 87 mm and 93 mm rainfall respectively. Andheri subway has also been temporarily shut for vehicles due to waterlogging Tulsi lake, one of the seven key sources of potable water for Mumbai, started overflowing. *—PTI*

Incessant rains led to waterlogging in several areas of Nagpur city on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

SC stays death row given to rape convict

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The Supreme Court has stayed the execution of the death sentence awarded to a man convicted for raping and murdering a 30-year-old law student in Kerala in 2016.

A bench headed by Justice BR Gavai passed the order while hearing the convict's plea challenging the Kerala High Court's 20 May verdict that upheld his conviction and confirmed the death sentence handed to him by a trial court.

High Court had confirmed the death sentence awarded to Muhammed Ameer-Ul-Islam, a migrant labourer who was 22 years of age at the time of the incident in April 2016.

According to the prosecution, the convict had barged into the victim's house on 28 April, 2016 with an intention to rape her and when she resisted, he attacked her with a knife and inflicted injuries upon her.

In its order, the apex court said the original case record be summoned from the trial court and the high court.

The bench directed that the State shall place before it the reports of all the probation officers relating to the appellant within eight weeks.

Besides passing other directions, it said the superintendent of prison, Central Prison and Correctional Home, Viyyur, shall submit within eight weeks a report regarding the nature of work performed by the appellant while in jail. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

- In its order, the apex court said the original case record be summoned from the trial court and the High Court.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

MP girl raped in moving car by by Insta friend

GWALIOR, 20 JULY

A 13-year-old girl was allegedly raped in a moving car by a man she befriended on social media while another person shot a video of the act in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior, police said on Saturday.

Police have arrested two out of three accused.

While the incident occurred in the Mohna police station limits on 1 June, a complaint was lodged on Thursday, he said.

The girl, a Class 9 student, befriended one of the accused on Instagram and was introduced to another man. The duo chatted with her on social media, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Niranjan Sharma told reporters.

On 1 June, the two men and another accused met the girl at her village and forced her to go for a ride with them, he said.

As per the complaint, one of the accused raped her, and another shot a video of the act while their accomplice drove the car, the official said.

Later, the accused repeatedly called the girl to meet, threatening to circulate the video, he said.

When the girl refused to give in to their threats, the video was circulated, and her family found out about the assault, the official said. *—PTI*

HC: Being in Dawood's gang doesn't make you terrorist

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

Bombay High Court has said fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim has been declared a terrorist in his individual capacity under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). It added that any association with him or his gang would not attract provisions of the stringent law.

A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande, in an order of 11 July, details of which were made available on Friday, granted bail to two people held by the Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad in August 2022.

The ATS had claimed Faiz Bhiwandiwala, from whom it seized 600g of ganja, and Parvez Vaid, were members of Dawood Ibrahim's gang.

The duo was booked under UAPA for being members of a terrorist organisation, committing terrorist acts and collecting funds for commission of an offence as well as under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act provisions.

In its judgment, the HC said the Union government had issued a notification on 4 September, 2019, notifying "Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar as a 'Terrorist' under the UAPA".

The bench said UAPA has segregated the activities of an individual, which would amount to a terrorist act on one hand, and the activities by the terrorist gang and terrorist organisation on the other. *—PTI*

4 from Kerala killed in Kuwait building fire

PATHANAMTHITTA, 20 JULY

Four members of a family from Pathanamthitta died in a fire that broke out at their residence in Kuwait. The incident took place on Friday night at Abbassia in Kuwait.

The victims are Mathew Muzhakkal, his wife Lini Abraham and their children Isaac and Erin. The family left for Kuwait after their vacation on Thursday night. "Mathew has been working there for the past 15 years. His wife is a nurse. The children are studying there. They left after their vacation on Thursday night from Nedumbassery," a relative told the media on Saturday. *—PTI*

AMBASSADOR'S DAY OUT

US Ambassador Eric Garcetti on Saturday enjoys an e-scooter ride in Kolkata's New Town area. *PHOTO: X?@@USAMBINDIA*

MANDATES UCC REGISTRATION

HC grants protection to live-in couple

PHOTO: FREEPIK

NAINITAL, 20 JULY

In an order that has left people surprised, Uttarakhand High Court has asked police to provide security to an interfaith live-in couple if they register their relationship within 48 hours under the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which is yet to be implemented in the state.

The order came as a surprise as the UCC is yet to be implemented in Uttarakhand.

The government advocate clarified that the junior government advocate appearing in the court in the matter was not aware that the notification for the UCC has not been issued in the state as yet.

It was a misunderstanding, the government advocate said.

A revised order will be issued, deleting the portion relating to the UCC, he added.

A recall application will be filed in this regard on Saturday. In the meantime, protection will be provided to the couple, he said.

The Uniform Civil Code, Uttarakhand, 2024 is an act to govern and regulate laws relating to marriage and divorce, succession, live-in relationships and matters related thereto.

According to section 1(2) of the Act, it shall come into force on such date as the government may, by a notification in the gazette, appoint.

However, since no notification has been issued by the government, the Act is not in force in the state.

In the matter at hand, a 26-year-old Hindu woman and a 21-year-old Muslim man, who are in a live-in relationship, had filed the petition, saying both of them are adults and belong to different religions. Feeling threatened by the families of the couple, they had approached the high court. *—PTI*

- Asked In the matter at hand, a 26-year-old Hindu woman and a 21-year-old Muslim man, who are in a live-in relationship, had filed the petition, saying both of them are adults and belong to different religions.

UP forms State Capital Region on lines of NCR

LUCKNOW, 20 JULY

Uttar Pradesh government Friday notified the formation of the State Capital Region' (SCR) on the lines of the National Capital Region (NCR).

Governor Anandiben Patel also approved the establishment of Uttar Pradesh State Capital Region Development Authority (UP-SCRDA).

The notification said the newly formed Uttar Pradesh State Capital Region includes Lucknow and the adjoining districts of Hardoi, Sitapur, Unnao, Rae Bareli and Barabanki. According to the notification, a total area of 27,826 sq km will be included in the SCR. The UP-SCRDA will oversee the implementation of development projects and ensure effective management of resources within the newly defined area.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had initiated this project in September 2022.

"People from different cities want to come here and make their permanent residence. The population pressure is also increasing in the surrounding districts and many a times complaints of unplanned development are also received. In such a situation, keeping in view the future requirements, 'Uttar Pradesh State Capital Region' should be formed on the lines of National Capital Region (NCR)," he had said. *—PTI*

- According to the notification, a total area of 27,826 sq km will be included in the SCR.

REMEMBERING THE HEROES

Demonstrators march during a rally to mark the 77th anniversary of the 1947 assassination of Myanmar independence heroes including Gen. Aung San, late father of Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi
PHOTO: PTI

CrowdStrike outage shows fragility of tech set-up

Screens and billboars in Times Square impacted by Microsoft outage. Airlines, banks, hospitals and other risk-averse organisations around the world chose cybersecurity company CrowdStrike to protect their computer systems from hackers and data breaches
PHOTO: X/ @RAINMAKER1973

Airlines, banks, hospitals and other risk-averse organisations around the world chose cybersecurity company CrowdStrike to protect their computer systems from hackers and data breaches.

But all it took was one faulty CrowdStrike software update to cause global disruptions Friday that grounded flights, knocked banks and media outlets offline, and disrupted hospitals, retailers and other services. "This is a function of the very homogenous technology that goes into the backbone of all of our IT infrastructure," said Gregory Falco, an assistant professor of engineering at Cornell University. "What really causes this mess is that we rely on very few companies, and everybody uses the same folks, so everyone goes down at the same time."

The trouble with the update issued by CrowdStrike and affecting computers running Microsoft's Windows operating system was not a hacking incident or cyberattack, according to CrowdStrike, which apologised and said a fix was on the way.

But it wasn't an easy fix. It required "boots on the ground" to remediate, said Gartner analyst Aeric Grenier.

"The fix is working, it's just a very manual process and there's no magic key to unlock it," Grenier said. "I think that is probably what companies are struggling with the most here."

While not everyone is a client of CrowdStrike and its platform known as Falcon, it is one of the leading cybersecurity providers, particularly in transportation, healthcare, banking and other sectors that have a lot at stake in keeping their computer systems working. "They're usually risk-averse organisations that don't want something that's crazy innovative, but that can work and also cover their butts when something goes wrong. That's what CrowdStrike is," Falco said.

"And they're looking around at their colleagues in other sectors and saying, Oh, you know, this company also uses that, so I'm gonna need them, too.'" Worrying about the fragility of a globally connected technology ecosystem is nothing new. It's what drove fears in the 1990s of a technical glitch that could cause chaos at the turn of the millennium.

"This is basically what we were all worried about with Y2K, except it's actually happened this time," wrote Australian cybersecurity consultant Troy Hunt on the social platform X.

But what's different now is "that these companies are even more entrenched," Falco said. Founded in 2011 and publicly traded since 2019, CrowdStrike describes itself in its annual report to financial regulators as having "reinvented cybersecurity for the cloud era and transformed the way cybersecurity is delivered and experienced by customers." It emphasises its use of artificial intelligence in helping to keep pace with adversaries. It reported having 29,000 subscribing customers at the start of the year.

The Austin, Texas-based firm is one of the more visible cybersecurity companies in the world and spends heavily on marketing, including Super Bowl ads. At cybersecurity conferences, it's known for large booths displaying massive action-figure statues representing different state-sponsored hacking groups that CrowdStrike technology promises to defend against.

CrowdStrike CEO George Kurtz is among the most highly compensated in the world, recording more than USD 230 million in total compensation in the last three years. Kurtz is also a driver for a CrowdStrike-sponsored car racing team.

After his initial statement about the problem was criticised for lack of contrition, Kurtz apologised in a later social media post Friday and on NBC's "Today Show."

While the problem is an easy technical fix, he said, it's impact could be long-lasting for some organisations because of the hands-on work needed to fix each affected computer. "It's really, really difficult to touch millions of machines. And people are on vacation right now, so, you know, the CEO will be coming back from his trip to the Bahamas in a couple of weeks and he won't be able to use his computers."

Stiennon said he did not think the outage revealed a bigger problem with the cybersecurity industry or CrowdStrike as a company. Forrester analyst Allie Mellen credited CrowdStrike for clearly telling customers what they need to do to fix the problem. She said there will need to be a deeper look at what occurred and what changes can be made to prevent it from happening again.

"A lot of this is likely to come down to the testing and software development process and the work that they've put into testing these kinds of updates before deployment," Mellen said. *—AP*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Covid: 11.9L excess deaths in 2020 during pandemic

In India, 11.9 lakh excess deaths occurred in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, 17 per cent higher compared to 2019, an international study has found.

The estimate is about eight times higher than the official Covid-19 deaths in India, and 1.5 times the World Health Organization's estimates, researchers, including those from the University of Oxford, UK, said.

Using data of over 7.65 lakh individuals, the study estimated changes in life expectancy at birth, by gender and social group between 2019 and 2020 in India, a country where one-third of global pandemic excess deaths are thought to have occurred, according to the authors.

The data was taken from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5).

The life expectancy in women fell by 3.1 years, while it fell by 2.1 years in men, the authors said. Gender inequalities in healthcare and resource distribution within households could be possible reasons, they said.

The patterns contrast with those seen in high-income countries, where excess deaths were higher among men than women during the pandemic, the authors said in the study published in the journal Science Advances.

Looking at social groups, the researchers found that high caste Hindu groups experienced a life expectancy decline of 1.3 years, whereas Muslims and Scheduled Tribes experienced a 5.4-year and 4.1-year drop in their life expectancies.

The pandemic exacerbated the disparities already faced by these marginalised caste and religious groups in terms of life expectancy, the authors said.

"Marginalised groups already had lower life expectancy, and the pandemic further increased the gap between the most privileged Indian social groups, and the most marginalised social groups in India," said first author Aashish Gupta, a research fellow at the University of Oxford.

Further, the researchers found that deaths in India increased across age groups, most prominently among the youngest and the oldest, whereas drops in life expectancy in high-income countries were largely driven by increased deaths in those aged 60 years and above.

Excess deaths among the youngest could be explained by children in certain areas being more vulnerable to the Covid-19 infection, they said.

The indirect effects of the pandemic and lockdowns, including deteriorating economic conditions and disruptions to public health services, also contributed to excess mortality in the youngest age groups, according to the authors.

"Using unique demographic and health survey data, our study highlights the importance of focussing on inequality when measuring mortality and shows that pandemics can worsen, rather than equalise, existing disparities," said author Ridhi Kashyap, a professor of demography and computational social science, University of Oxford.

"This was particularly noticeable on the role that Covid-19 had in further exacerbating the health impacts of pre-pandemic gender disparities," Kashyap said.

Reacting to the study, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a statement, describing the study's estimates as "gross and misleading."

The study's "untenable and unacceptable" findings are based on a methodology having "critical flaws," the most important one being taking the mortality observed in a subset of households surveyed in the NFHS and extrapolating these results to the entire country, according to the statement. "The NFHS sample is representative of the country only when it is considered as a whole.

The 23 per cent of households included in this analysis from part of 14 states cannot be considered representative of the country," it said. The study fails to acknowledge India's "robust" Civil Registration System (CRS), which recorded a substantial increase in death registrations (over 99 per cent) in 2020, up from 92 per cent in 2019, not solely attributable to the pandemic, the statement added. *—PTI*

Death numbers 'misleading', says health ministry

The findings of a paper published in academic journal Science Advances on life expectancy during the Covid pandemic in India in 2020 are based on "untenable and unacceptable" estimates, the Union health ministry said on Saturday after the findings were highlighted in some media reports. While the paper's authors claim to have followed standard methodology of analysing the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), there are critical flaws in the methodology, the ministry said in a statement. *—PTI*

The researchers found that deaths in India increased across age groups, most prominently among the youngest and the oldest
PHOTO: PTI

What Usha Vance's rise means to other S Asian, Hindu Americans

Usha Chilukuri Vance, entered the spotlight this week as the wife of JD Vance, former President Trump's running mate in the 2024 presidential election.

Her rise comes at a time when, across the aisle, there's another prominent figure of South Asian descent: Vice President Kamala Harris, the nation's first woman and person of colour in her role.

During its primaries, the Republican Party also saw increased South Asian representation with presidential candidates including Vivek Ramaswamy, Nikki Haley and Tulsi Gabbard.

Some Indian American political empowerment groups say they're glad there's more representation. Still, they don't think Usha Vance's rise to prominence will sway more liberal South Asian American voters. Others say what needs to be examined is how the GOP responds to hate speech made about her religious identity.

On Wednesday, Usha Vance introduced her husband, Ohio's junior senator, at the Republican National Convention by talking about their relationship.

"I grew up in San Diego, in a middle-class community with two loving parents, both immigrants from India and a wonderful sister," she said at the convention. "That JD and I could meet at all, let alone fall in love and marry is a testament to this great country."

Chintan Patel, executive director of civic engagement group Indian American Impact, said seeing Usha Vance in a position where she could become the first South Asian second lady, helps people reimagine what is possible.

"It is quite an inspiration for our community in terms of the increase in representation within Indian, South Asian Americans," Patel said.

Usha Vance, 38, was raised by a mother who was a biologist and provost at the University of California at San Diego, and a father who was an engineer, according to JD Vance's campaign. She met her husband in law school at Yale University and later earned a master of philosophy at the University of Cambridge.

After law school Usha Vance clerked for conservative judges: first for US Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, then an appeals court judge in Washington, and later for Chief Justice John Roberts.

She was then a trial lawyer at Munger, Tolles and Olson, a law firm that touts itself as "radically progressive". She left the firm shortly after her husband was chosen as Trump's running mate.

JD Vance with his wife Usha Vance. Usha is a registered Republican but had identified as a Democrat in 2014
PHOTO: PTI

Usha Vance is a registered Republican but had identified as a Democrat in 2014.

Patel said while it is inspiring to see a South Asian woman in Usha Vance's position, what will matter more to voters is where JD Vance stands on issues, such as immigration, climate change and health care.

Patel said he is not worried about the South Asian vote being divided between both tickets. He said South Asians are going to support candidates who share their values, no matter the family's racial makeup.

"We are certainly proud that she could be in this position, but we are anxious about the legislation and the policies this potential administration could support," Patel said.

Some South Asian Americans have already accused the Republican Party and media outlets of using Usha Vance's profile to foster a model minority narrative about all Indians when there are many policies that also hurt their community.

At the same time, there have also been reported instances of racism, with some even mocking the names of the Vances' children.

Deepa Iyer, an Indian American activist and writer, said most of the Indian community rejects policies that are anti-immigrant, racist and homophobic. She called the representation at the RNC "fake" and not representative of the Indian community.

"We need people of colour and immigrants who are going to uplift policies that are going to be inclusive and equitable," Iyer said. "Rather than policies and platforms that are going to divide and polarise people. So, the representation does not mean anything for communities that are going to be affected by these really polarising policies."

A 2023 Pew Research Centre study showed that, overall about 62 per cent of Asian American voters identify as Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party and 34 per cent are Republican. When broken down by demographic, the study showed that 68 per cent of Indian Americans identify as Democrats and 29 per cent as Republicans.

Priti Pandya-Patel, co-founder of the New Jersey Republican Party's South Asian Coalition, said when she learned that Usha Vance was Indian and Hindu she felt a sense of pride knowing that someone who looks like her could make it to the White House. Pandya-Patel said Usha Vance's presence shows how closely associated the GOP is with South Asian views.

"Being Hindu, there are a lot of similar values and beliefs of the Republican Party that don't have to do with religion," Pandya-Patel said. "I think that people are really starting to wake up a little more and see the Republican Party bring us together." Iyer said there is a small group of Indian Americans and Hindus who are excited about the prospect of someone like Usha Vance being close to the seat of power but most will be looking at the policies to make a decision.

Suhag Shukla, executive director of the Hindu American Foundation, said there has been increased representation of the South Asian community in positions of power.

If Vance became the second lady, "it would be nothing short of historic," Shukla said.

She said that if Usha Vance becomes the second lady, the impact she will have on the community depends on which causes she advocates for.

"I would hope that the content of her character and what she brings to the table will be the basis by which she is judged," Shukla said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@MMARRERO CRUZ

Vietnamese leader Nguyen Trong dies at 80

HANOI, 20 JULY

Vietnam's long-serving leader Nguyen Phu Trong has died "after a period of illness", marking the end of a political era. The announcement came days after the government said he was stepping back to focus on his health and had handed duties to President To Lam. As the general secretary of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party since 2011, and at one point also double-hatting as president, Trong was seen as one of the country's most powerful leaders in decades. Besides overseeing the supercharged growth of Vietnam's economy, the 80-year-old was known for his "blazing furnaces" anti-corruption campaign. Trong's death comes at a time of political turbulence for Vietnam's Communist leadership. In recent months three top leaders quit following unspecified accusations of wrongdoing.

—BCC News

Pakistan reports ninth polio case of year

ISLAMABAD, 20 JULY

Pakistan on Saturday reported the ninth polio case of the year, jolting the country's efforts to eradicate the crippling disease. The fresh case was reported in Balochistan province's Zhob district, Geo News reported. The victim was a one-and-a-half-year-old child hailing from Zhob's Hassanzai area, it said. The Prime Minister's coordinator on National Health Services, Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad, said nine children had been affected by poliovirus in the country this year, according to the report. The Pakistan government carried out six anti-poliovirus drives this year. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/ @ARMIEHAMMER

Hammer denies allegations of cannibalism

LOS ANGELES, 20 JULY

Embattled Hollywood actor Armie Hammer has opened up about the allegations of cannibalism as well as physical and sexual abuse against him. Hammer, who shot to fame with his performances in films such as "The Social Network" and "Call me by your name", had a public downfall in 2021 after messages he allegedly sent were leaked, detailing his graphic sexual desires and cannibalistic fantasies. In an interview with British broadcaster Piers Morgan, the actor was asked about the allegations, which he has vehemently denied in the past. Morgan later asked Hammer point-blank if he had ever "eaten any human flesh". *—PTI*

Nigeria fines Meta $220M for violating data protection law

ABUJA, 20 JULY

Nigeria's government on Friday announced a fine of USD 220 million on Meta, saying its investigations found "multiple and repeated" violations of the country's data protection and consumer rights laws on Facebook and WhatsApp. A statement from Nigeria's Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, or FCCPC, listed five ways that Meta violated data laws in the West African country, including by sharing the data of Nigerians without authorization, denying consumers the right to self-determine the use of their data, discriminatory practices as well as abuse of market dominance. "The Commission has now entered a Final Order, and issued a penalty against Meta Parties," FCCPC chief Executive Adamu Abdullahi said. *—AP*

Trump pledges to end war during call with Zelenskyy

Volodymyr Zelenskyy invites Donald Trump to visit Ukraine

Volodymyr Zelenskyy *PHOTO: PTI*

Donald Trump *PHOTO: AP/PTI*

WASHINGTON, 20 JULY

Former US president Donald Trump has pledged to end Ukraine's war with Russia after its President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reached out to the former US President to congratulate him on his Republican presidential nomination.

The two leaders spoke on Friday over the phone. "Zelenskyy of Ukraine and I had a very good phone call earlier today. He congratulated me on a very successful Republican National Convention and becoming the Republican nominee for President of United States," Trump said in a post on Truth Social, a social media post.

Zelenskyy invited the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, to Ukraine.

The call gains significance as this is his first conversation with a foreign leader after officially becoming the Republican Party's presidential nominee. It also reflects the growing realisation among the international community of his electoral chances in the November 5 elections.

> **Zelenskyy of Ukraine and I had a very good phone call earlier today. He congratulated me on a very successful Republican National Convention and becoming the Republican nominee for President of United States**
>
> -Donald Trump, Former US president

"I appreciate Zelenskyy for reaching out because I, as your next President of the United States, will bring peace to the world and end the war that has cost so many lives and devastated countless innocent families. Both sides will be able to come together and negotiate a deal that ends the violence and paves a path forward to prosperity," Trump wrote.

Trump said during the call Zelenskyy condemned the heinous assassination attempt on him last Saturday and remarked about the American people coming together in the spirit of Unity during these times.

—PTI with Agencies

Biden to get back on the campaign trail next week

WASHINGTON, 20 JULY

US President Joe Biden has said that he would continue his campaign for reelection and take on rival Donald Trump, as he deals with the fallout from his Covid-19 diagnosis and growing calls from Democrats for him to quit the race.

Biden, who tested Covid-19 positive a few days ago, is in isolation at his Delaware residence, where he is expected to spend the rest of the week. "Donald Trump's dark vision for the future is not who we are as Americans. Together, as a party and as a country, we can and will defeat him at the ballot box," Biden, 81, said in a statement issued by his campaign on Friday, a day after Trump, 78, formally accepted his party's presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

The President also criticised Trump's Thursday night keynote speech at the Republican National Convention. "For over 90 minutes, he focused on his own grievances, with no plan to unite us and no plan to make life better for working people," said the president referring to Trump's speech.

"He avoided mentioning his Project 2025 agenda, but still proudly flaunted the worst of MAGA (Make America Great Again) extremism," Biden said.

Biden has been sidelined since Wednesday when he was diagnosed with Covid-19 moments before delivering remarks in Las Vegas. He abruptly cut his trip short and flew to his beach home. *—PTI*

Joe Biden *PHOTO: AP/PTI*

- Biden has been sidelined since Wednesday when he was diagnosed with Covid-19 moments before delivering remarks in Las Vegas. He abruptly cut his trip short and flew to his beach home

41 RESCUED

Boat fire off Haiti kills at least 40 migrants, says UN

HAITI, 20 JULY

At least 40 migrants have died after the boat they were travelling in caught fire off the northern coast of Haiti, a United Nations agency says.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) says 41 others were rescued by the Haitian Coast Guard. The vessel was travelling from Cap-Haitien to the Turks and Caicos Islands, more than 220km (137 miles) away, the IOM said.

The exact cause of the fire is not yet clear, but a local official told Reuters that people on the boat were lighting candles in a ritual to ask for safe passage, leading gasoline-filled drums to catch fire.

The injured are receiving care provided by the IOM, and 11 of them were taken to the nearest hospital, the agency said.

Tens of thousands of people flee Haiti every year, escaping poverty, lawlessness and gang violence at home. Rival armed groups took control of the capital, Port-au-Prince, earlier this year, forcing Prime Minister Ariel Henry to resign weeks later.

Grégoire Goodstein, IOM's chief of mission in Haiti, said: "This devastating event highlights the risks faced by children, women and men migrating through irregular routes - demonstrating the crucial need for safe and legal pathways for migration.

Gang violence on average killed or injured more than one person per hour in the first three months of this year, according to UN data.

—BBC News

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) says 41 others were rescued by the Haitian Coast Guard *PHOTO: BBC NEWS*

13 Palestinians killed in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, 20 JULY

At least 13 people were killed in three Israeli airstrikes that hit refugee camps in central Gaza overnight into Saturday, according to Palestinians health officials, as cease-fire talks in Cairo appear to make progress.

Among the dead in Nuseirat Refugee Camp and Bureij Refugee Camp were three children and one woman, according to Palestinian ambulance teams that transported the bodies to the nearby Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital. The 13 corpses were counted by AP journalists at the hospital.

The latest casualties follow a rare moment of hope in war ravaged Gaza, after a medical teams recovered a live baby from a heavily pregnant Palestinian mother killed in an airstrike that hit her home in Nuseirat late Thursday evening. Heavily pregnant Ola al-Kurd, 25, was killed along with six others in the blast, but was quickly rushed by emergency workers to Al-Awda Hospital in northern Gaza in the hope of saving the unborn child. Hours later, doctors told The Associated Press that a baby boy had been delivered.

The still-unnamed newborn is stable but has suffered from a shortage of oxygen and has been placed in an incubator, said Dr. Khalil Dajran. The baby boy's father was wounded in the same strike, but survived.

The war in Gaza, which was sparked by Hamas' 7 October attack on southern Israel, has killed more than 38,900 people, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. The war has created a humanitarian catastrophe in the coastal Palestinian territory, displaced most of its 2.3 million population and triggered widespread hunger.

The Israel-Hamas war has left thousands of women and children dead, according to health officials in the Gaza Strip. *—AP*

An Israeli soldier moves on the top of a tank near the Israeli-Gaza border, as seen from southern Israel *PHOTO: PTI*

AT LEAST 60 MISSING

12 dead in bridge collapse, flash floods in China

BEIJING, 20 JULY

At least 12 people were killed in a bridge collapse and more than 60 others went missing in flash floods in China's Shaanxi and Sichuan provinces, officials said on Saturday.

The highway bridge collapse triggered by torrential rains in northwest Shaanxi Province killed 12 people and left 31 others missing, local authorities said.

The bridge, located in Zhashui County in Shangluo City, partially collapsed around 8:40 pm on Friday due to a sudden downpour and flash floods, according to the provincial publicity department.

So far, rescue workers have found 12 dead bodies and rescued one person, said the ruling Chinese Communist Party's provincial committee.

The collapse caused 17 cars and eight trucks to plunge into the Jinqian River below the bridge, according to initial investigations.

Rescue officials have recovered seven vehicles that had fallen into the swollen river. Thirty-one people remain unaccounted for, and search efforts are ongoing, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Separately, more than 30 people remained missing after flash floods struck Xinhua Village in Sichuan Province at around 2:30 am Saturday, local authorities said. The floods triggered by torrential rains also damaged over 40 houses in the village in Hanyuan County, Ya'an City, according to the county's emergency management bureau.

The disaster also disrupted roads, bridges, and communications, and rescue operations are currently underway, the report said. *—PTI*

KP Sharma Oli *PHOTO: X/@KPSHARMAOLI*

NEPAL PM OLI ALL SET TO WIN VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

KATHMANDU, 20 JULY

Nepal's newly appointed Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is expected to win a vote of confidence in Parliament on Sunday, nearly a week after he was sworn-in to lead another coalition government in the Himalayan nation facing frequent power struggles.

The 72-year-old veteran Communist leader was sworn-in on Monday as the Himalayan nation's Prime Minister for the fourth time. He was administered the oath of office and secrecy along with 21 other members of the Cabinet.

According to Nepal's Constitution, Oli needs to secure a vote of confidence from Parliament within 30 days of appointment, which he is likely to secure easily.

The minimum number to form a government in the 275-strong House of Representatives is just 138.

Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist have a combined strength of 167, and two other ruling parties, Janata Samajwadi Party and Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party, have seven and four seats, respectively. *—PTI*

Houthis attack damages Singapore-flagged vessel

SINGAPORE, 20 JULY

A Singapore-flagged vessel was damaged in an attack allegedly by Houthi militants southeast of Yemen on Friday, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said in a statement.

The MPA said it was informed that container vessel the LOBIVIA was hit by "unidentified projectiles" while transiting the Gulf of Aden, resulting in a fire onboard that was subsequently extinguished by the crew.

There are no Singaporeans among the crew, Channel News Asia reported, citing the authority and adding that all crew are accounted for and safe. Despite being hit, the vessel was able to set sail and arrived at Somalia's Berbera Port. Damage assessment and repairs, if needed, will be carried out, it said.

In a televised speech, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said the group had launched ballistic missiles and drones towards the LOBIVIA.

According to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, the LOBIVIA was hit about 83 nautical miles southeast of the port city of Aden, Yemen, on two separate occasions by two missiles.

Since November, Houthi militants in Yemen have launched drone and missile strikes in shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The group has said its actions are in solidarity with Palestinians affected by Israel's war in Gaza. *—PTI*

Slow recovery after CrowdStrike update outage

WASHINGTON, 20 JULY

Businesses and services around the world were slowly recovering after a massive technology outage wreaked havoc across the world and raised questions about the vulnerability of the global interconnected economy.

A faulty software update caused the "unprecedented" outage on Friday, grounding flights, knocking out financial companies and news outlets, and disrupting hospitals, supermarkets, small businesses and government offices.

By Saturday, several services were back online, but George Kurtz, the CEO of US cybersecurity company CrowdStrike – whose botched software update on its Falcon Sensor hit Microsoft's Windows operating system – cautioned that a total recovery could take weeks. CrowdStrike said it had rolled out a fix for the problem and Kurtz said he wanted to "personally apologise to every organisation, every group and every person who has been impacted" by the widespread glitch. US President Joe Biden's team was talking to CrowdStrike and those affected and was "standing by to provide assistance as needed", the White House said in a statement. US billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said on Friday that he has completely removed cybersecurity company CrowdStrike from all your system. *—Al Jazeera*

PHOTO: PTI

RELIEF FOR IMRAN KHAN, ECP TO RESERVE SEATS OF PTI ON SC'S ORDERS

ISLAMABAD, 20 JULY

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said that it will implement the Supreme Court's order on allotting reserved seats to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party. On 12 July, a 13-member full bench of the Supreme Court, in a key 8-5 judgment, ruled that 71-year-old Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party was eligible for the seats reserved for women and minorities in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies. The PTI will become the largest party in the National Assembly as its seats will soar from 86 to 109 after it gains 23 seats reserved for women and minorities. Candidates backed by the PTI, who had contested and won the 8 February elections as independents had joined the Sunni Ittehad Council, a political alliance of Islamic political and Barelvi religious parties in Pakistan, to form a coalition of convenience.

The ECP rejected the SIC plea on the pretext that it had not contested the elections as a party. It said the party only got strength when the PTI-backed independently elected candidates joined its ranks after winning the elections. *—PTI*

GOVT JOBS QUOTA

Curfew imposed as 105 die in Bangladesh

DHAKA, 20 JULY

Police imposed a strict curfew across Bangladesh and military forces patrolled parts of the capital Saturday to quell further violence after days of clashes over the allocation of government jobs left several people dead and hundreds injured.

The curfew follows what was likely the deadliest day yet in the weeks of protests despite a ban on public gatherings. Reports vary on the number of people killed Friday, with Somoy TV reporting 43. An Associated Press reporter saw 23 bodies at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, but it was not immediately clear whether they all died on Friday.

Another 22 people died Thursday as protesting students attempted to impose a "complete shutdown" of the country. Several people were also killed Tuesday and Wednesday. All total at least 105 people have been killed in the nation. The protests, which began weeks ago but escalated sharply when violence erupted Tuesday, represent the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since she won a fourth consecutive term in office after elections in January that were boycotted by the main opposition groups.

Students clash over quota system at Jahangir Nagar University at Savar outside Dhaka, Bangladesh on Saturday *PHOTO: AP/PTI*

Police and protesters clashed in the streets and at university campuses in Dhaka and other cities across the south Asian country. Authorities moved to block online communications by banning mobile and internet services. Some television news channels also went off the air, and the websites of most Bangladesh newspapers were not loading or were being updated. Authorities could not be reached immediately to confirm figures for the overall deaths, but the Daily Prothom Alo newspaper reported 103 people were killed since Tuesday. The United States Embassy in Dhaka said Friday that reports indicated "hundreds to possibly thousands" were injured across Bangladesh. It said the situation was "extremely volatile."

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

HDFC Bank Q1 net profit rises 33% to ₹16,474 cr

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

HDFC Bank's consolidated net profit grew 33.17 per cent to Rs 16,474.85 crore in the June 2024 quarter. The bank had posted a post-tax net profit of Rs 12,370 crore on a consolidated basis in the year-ago period, it said in a regulatory filing. On a standalone level, its June quarter net profit rose to Rs 16,174 crore from Rs 11,951 crore in the year-ago period but was down from the preceding March quarter's 16,511 crore. The bank's total income increased to Rs 83,701 crore from Rs 57,816 crore a year ago. Its provisioning was reduced to Rs 2,602 crore from Rs 2,860 crore a year earlier. The lender's gross non-performing assets ratio inched up to 1.33 per cent from 1.24 per cent in March. HDFC Bank's overall capital adequacy was 19.33 per cent as of 30 June, 2024. *—PTI*

ONGC acquires Equinor stake for $60 million

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

ONGC Videsh Ltd, the overseas investment arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), has acquired Norwegian firm Equinor's stake in an Azerbaijan oilfield and an associated pipeline for USD 60 million, the firm said in a statement. OVL "has signed a definitive sale purchase agreement (SPA) for directly acquiring 0.615 per cent participating interest (PI) in offshore Azeri Chirag Gunashli (ACG) oil field in Azerbaijan from Equinor. The agreement also includes acquiring 0.737 per cent shares of the Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline company through its wholly-owned subsidiary ONGC BTC Limited," it added. The acquisitions, expected to be completed in the upcoming months, involve a investment of up to USD 60 million. *—PTI*

Union Bank net profit rises 13.7% to ₹3,679 crore

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

State-owned Union Bank of India on Saturday reported a 13.7 per cent growth in net profit to Rs 3,679 crore for the June 2024 quarter and flagged challenges on the net interest margin front. The bank's core net interest income grew 6.5 per cent to Rs 9,412 crore on the back of an 11.5 per cent growth in advances. Its net interest margin narrowed by over 0.13 per cent to 3.05 per cent. The other income increased 15.53 per cent to Rs 4,509 crore on healthy growth in the core fee income. The fresh slippages came at Rs 2,318 crore, and the gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 4.54 per cent. Its overall capital adequacy stood at 17.92 per cent, core tier-I at 13.81 per cent. *—PTI*

Blue Dart Q1 sales clock at ₹1,343 crore

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Blue Dart Express Limited, South Asia's premier express air, integrated transportation, and distribution logistics company, declared its financial results for the quarter ended 30 June, at its Board Meeting held in Mumbai. The company posted profit after tax of Rs. 51.53 crore for the quarter ended 30 June. Revenue from operations stood at Rs. 1,343 crore. Blue Dart, known for its extensive network and cutting-edge technology, demonstrated consistent growth and remained on track with its expansion plans. Blue Dart's positive outlook reflects its readiness to capitalise on future prospects and maintain its reputation as a provider of exceptional logistics solutions. The company expanded its electric vehicle (EV) fleet, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability. *—PTI*

INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES HIT RECORD $666.85B

All-time high is driven by surging gold & foreign currency asset

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

India's foreign exchange reserves have surged to a record high, reaching a new peak of USD 666.85 billion, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The data highlights an increase of USD 9.69 billion in just one week, as of 12 July, surpassing the previous high of USD 657.2 billion. The reserves have been rising intermittently for some time now.

The RBI data reveals that India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of forex reserves, rose by USD 8.3 billion to USD 585.47 billion. Additionally, gold reserves increased by USD 1.2 billion, reaching USD 58.66 billion.

Data highlights an increase of $9.69 billion in one week *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

According to a recent RBI report, India's foreign exchange reserves are now sufficient to cover over 11 months of projected imports.

In the calendar year 2023, the RBI added approximately USD 58 billion to its foreign exchange reserves. In contrast, in 2022, India's forex reserves declined by a cumulative USD 71 billion.

Forex reserves, or foreign exchange reserves (FX reserves), are assets held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority, typically in reserve currencies such as the US Dollar, and to a lesser extent, the Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling.

The country's foreign exchange reserves last reached an all-time high in October 2021. Much of the subsequent decline can be attributed to the increased cost of imported goods in 2022.

The RBI closely monitors the foreign exchange markets and intervenes only to maintain orderly market conditions by containing excessive volatility in the exchange rate, without reference to any pre-determined target level or band. *—ANI*

Foreign investors infuse ₹15K cr in mkt

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The foreign portfolio investors have infused Rs 15,420 crore so far this week in the Indian equity market, according to the data by National Securities Depository.

The net investment by the foreign portfolio investors (FPI) surged to Rs 30,772 crore so far in July indicating the good buying by the foreign investors in the Indian markets.

The foreign investors have so far bought equities worth of Rs 1,30,138 crore this year.

"FPI flows are expected to remain volatile, this week the markets were strong, led by strong earnings and commentary from the large-cap. This week the markets of India, Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and South Korea witnessed inflows, while the markets of Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam witnessed outflows" said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research, Kotak Securities.

PHOTO: PTI

- The net investment by the foreign portfolio investors (FPI) surged to Rs 30,772 crore so far in July indicating the good buying by the foreign investors in the Indian markets

Internationally the foreign investors this week have injected around USD 585 mn in Brazil, USD 300 mn in Indonesia, USD 324 mn in Malaysia and USD 2085 million in South Korea. While Taiwan witnessed an outflow of USD 5325 mn, Vietnam witnessed a selling of USD 278 mn of foreign investment this week.

According to market experts, foreign investors are investing in Indian markets amid a weakening in dollar and bond yields, and if this trend continues foreign investment will continue.

Foreign Institutional investors were sellers in January, April, and May, cumulatively selling equities worth around Rs 60,000 crores. *—ANI*

AI has placed a total order of 250 aircrafts *PHOTO: LOGISTICSINSIDER.IN*

AI, IndiGo place huge Airbus aircraft orders

TOULOUSE, 20 JULY

Airbus has revealed that Air India has placed a total order of 250 aircraft of which 210 are for A320 and 40 for A350 wide-body aircraft from which 6 A350 are already delivered, while IndiGo has ordered more than 1000 aircraft which includes 30 A350 state-of-the-art planes.

Airbus's latest figures, as of June 2024, highlight the demand for the A350, an aircraft known for its operational flexibility and efficiency.

The A350 Family, recognised as the world's most modern and efficient wide-body aircraft, boasts advanced technologies and aerodynamics that set it apart in the 300-410 seater category. Its clean-sheet design offers the lowest cost per seat of any large wide body, making it a preferred choice for long-haul flights.

Air India has already received six of its ordered A350s, with the remainder set to be delivered over the coming years according to the airline's needs and requirements.

IndiGo's order, meanwhile, represents an expansion of its fleet, with deliveries expected to align with the airline's strategic growth plans.

With 1,309 orders from 61 customers globally--including 1,254 for passenger variants and 55 freighters--the A350 Family has seen significant market traction. Airbus has delivered 606 A350s to 40 operators, including 85 of the larger A350-1000 variant. *—ANI*

- With 1,309 orders from 61 customers globally--including 1,254 for passenger variants and 55 freighters--the A350 Family has seen significant market traction

INDUSIND BANK PLANS TO RAISE ₹30,000 CRORE

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

Private sector lender IndusInd Bank on Friday said it plans to raise Rs 30,000 crore through debt securities and share sales. In a stock exchange filing, the lender said its Board of Directors approved the fund raise at a meeting held on Friday.

The Board has approved "raising of funds through debt securities in any permitted mode on a private placement basis as may be decided, for an aggregate amount of Rs 20,000 crores or its equivalent amount in permitted foreign currencies".

This is subject to the approval of shareholders and regulatory/statutory approvals.

Further, the bank plans to raise Rs 10,000 crore through issue or placement of securities including American Depository Receipts, Global Depository Receipts, Qualified Institutional Placement in permitted foreign currencies.

IndusInd Bank has convened its Annual General Meeting on August 27 in Pune.

Shares of the bank closed at Rs 1432.20 a piece on Friday, down 1.58 per cent over previous close. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FINPEDIA.CO

EPFO officers raise concern over inadequate IT infrastructure

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Employees' Provident Fund Officers' Association has sought the Union Labour Minister's intervention to improve the information technology infrastructure of the retirement fund body.

In a letter to the minister earlier this week, the EPF Officers' Association (EPFOA) said it has been regularly submitting requests for urgent interventions to upgrade the EPF IT systems – software, hardware, IT manpower - which are causing acute strain on EPF manpower and adversely affecting EPFO services.

The situation has now turned serious with officers and offices reporting significant system deficiencies on a daily basis, the association said.

Severely inadequate EPFO IT systems and resultant service bottlenecks are adversely affecting EPF services, it added.

Over the past several weeks, the application's performance has deteriorated, manifesting in frequent system slowdowns, involuntary user logout and complete system failures, it pointed out.

Previously, the EPFO management attributed the software performance issues to concurrent user logins.

While the EPFO is a financially robust organisation independent of the government administrative funding, the delay in launching the 2.0 version of the application software stands in stark contrast to the rapid technological advancements achieved by other departments.

It is reasonable to speculate that the claim settlement process would be exponentially accelerated with a fully functional software system. *—PTI*

Inadequate IT systems are adversely affecting services *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK Q1 PROFIT RISES 2% TO ₹3,520 CR

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Kotak Mahindra Bank on Saturday reported a 2 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 3,520 crore on standalone basis for the first quarter ended June 2024.

The private sector lender had posted a net profit of Rs 3,452 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year.

Total income during the period grew to Rs 15,675 crore as against Rs 13,183 crore in the year-ago quarter, Kotak Mahindra Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Interest income increased to Rs 12,746 crore from Rs 10,500 crore in Q1 FY24.

On the asset quality front, the bank's gross non-performing assets (or bad loans) remained flat at 1.39 per cent of gross advances.

Similarly, Net NPAs dropped to 0.35 per cent from 0.40 per cent in the same quarter a year ago.

Capital Adequacy Ratio of the bank stood at 22.41 per cent at the end of June 30, 2024, against 21.12 per cent at the end of the same quarter a year ago. *—PTI*

AFTER MICROSOFT OUTAGE

Exchanges and clearing corporations have not witnessed any significant impact on the trading *PHOTO: PTI*

5 Indian AMCs report disruptions in functioning

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Mutual fund industry AMFI on Saturday said the outage in Microsoft services impacted five asset management companies, which reported disruptions to some important functions but the issues were resolved during the day.

A widespread Microsoft outage disrupted flights, banks, media outlets and companies around the world on Friday.

A new CrowdStrike (cybersecurity software firm) update was being cited as the cause of the outage, which impacted Windows-based desktops and laptops.

All stock exchanges and clearing corporations remained unaffected due to a global outage of Microsoft systems, bourses said in a joint statement on Saturday.

On Friday, there was a global outage of Microsoft systems. This technical glitch has caused disruptions across various sectors globally.

"In India, all exchanges and clearing corporations functioned without any impact," the statement noted.

Out of the over 1,400 trading members ecosystem, 11 trading members reported disruptions to their operations, which were either resolved during the day or are being resolved, it added.

Overall, exchanges and clearing corporations have not witnessed any significant impact on the trading and clearing activities in the Indian securities market, the statement noted.

Besides, several traders in India faced operational disruption on Friday as a global service outage of Microsoft systems affected many brokerages, including 5paisa, IIFL Securities, Motilal Oswal and Angel One. Some brokerages later stated that their systems were restored. *—PTI*

TO MAKE EXPORTS COMPETITIVE

Tea industry seeks higher RoDTEP rates

KOLKATA, 20 JULY

The tea industry has sought higher rates under the RoDTEP scheme to make exports more competitive in the overseas markets.

Leading industry body Indian Tea Association (ITA), in its pre-budget memorandum, said that the present RoDTEP rate for bulk tea is 1.7 per cent (free on board) subject to a cap of Rs 6.70 per kg.

The association urged the government to increase the reward base rate under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) for black tea in bulk to remain competitive in the international markets.

The RoDTEP scheme ensures that exporters receive refunds on embedded taxes and duties that were previously non-recoverable.

RoDTEP scheme has already provided support amounting to Rs 42,000 crore to more than 10,500 export items *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

Another industry body Tea Association of India (TAI), in its pre-budget proposal submitted to the government said the RoDTEP rate for tea should be higher than the earlier MEIS (Merchandise Exports Incentive Scheme) of five per cent to enable Indian tea to retain its competitiveness in the global market.

Since its inception in January 2021, the RoDTEP scheme has already provided support amounting to Rs 42,000 crore to more than 10,500 export items, an official statement said in March.

The TAI said that this measure would prevent the dumping of cheap and duty-free tea from Nepal and boost exports of genuine Darjeeling tea.

The ITA said that the government should exempt tea from levy on TDS on cash withdrawals due to a lack of banking infrastructure in the tea-growing areas in the country. *—PTI*

Patanjali Foods profit surges to ₹262.90 crore

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The net profit of Patanjali Foods surged to Rs 262.90 crore Year-on-Year during the first quarter of the financial year 2024-25 (Q1FY25), the company informed the exchange in a filing.

The company reported a three-fold rise in profit year-on-year during the first quarter of this financial year, compared to Rs 88 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year,

The company also reported standalone revenue of Rs 7,173.06 crore during the first quarter of FY 2024-25. The EBITDA of the company registered a twofold growth to Rs 435.08 crore year on year, and a 4.08 per cent increase on a quarter-on-quarter basis.

The Food & FMCG segment's revenues remained flat at Rs 1,953.55 crore during the quarter. However, the proportion of revenue contributed by this segment to revenue from operations rose to 26.77 per cent in Q1FY25, compared to 24.84 per cent in the same quarter last year. The company has added new markets to its export portfolio, now reaching 22 countries. The company also stated that its also available on e-commerce platforms in global markets. *—ANI*

PHOTO: INDIANRETAILER.COM

PARIS OLYMPICS

The inspiring stories of Indian athletes

Reetika's journey: 1st Indian in heavy weight class

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Wrestler Reetika Hooda with coach Mandeep PHOTO: PTI

Going through the painful and energy-sucking process of weight-cutting is a nightmare for wrestlers but Reetika Hooda did not have to worry about it.

Wrestlers usually have to go without food, sometimes even without water, to ensure that the weight scale does not tilt against them.

But Reetika's team ensures that she takes additional small meals to gain strength, and chicken was added to the meal plan, defying the family tradition.

She not only succeeded, but pushed out established wrestlers like Kiran Bishnoi, whom she idolises, to qualify for the Paris Olympics after crowning herself as the U23 World Champion.

Her natural body weight is around 74-75 kg. So, it was never a great struggle to bring it to 72, not even now. Her body type is such that weight drops quickly.

"I just munch, train, munch, train and repeat. Of course, it's healthy protein intake. I have a different struggle," she said with a hearty laugh just before a training session.

"I have 3 meals in my schedule and I have to eat in between as well. Before sleeping also, I take something. My nutritionist Mitali decides what I need to eat. I had to start eating chicken for protein intake. It was difficult to develop a taste for that. I have settled for a semi-gravy type chicken. No one eats chicken in my family," she added. —*PTI*

It's all about getting the medal, says Deepika

Indian archer Deepika Kumari opened up about missing her daughter PHOTO: PTI

JAUX, 20 JULY

Deepika Kumari is torn between two worlds. One where the doting mother longs to be with her 19-month-old daughter Vedika, and another where the ace Indian archer craves for an elusive Olympic medal.

But the resilience she showed in fusing those two different spaces in her life has taken Deepika to the Paris Games, the fourth showpiece in her career.

Deepika's determination to achieve glory in the ultimate sporting event in the world was evident when she stayed away from her daughter for two months to finetune her preparation.

"It's difficult to explain the pain of being away from my daughter. But it's also about achieving what we have worked for over so many years," Deepika told PTI.

- Deepika's determination in the world was evident when she stayed away from her daughter for two months to finetune her preparation

Finally, Atanu Das, her husband and himself an international archer, took Vedika to Army Sports Institute in Pune just before Deepika departed to Paris.

It was an achingly emotional moment for Deepika.

"I miss her a lot, but that's how it is. Thankfully, she has been really supportive and has adapted well with my in-laws and Atanu," added Deepika.

But Deepika's turmoil had started immediately after giving birth to her daughter in December 2022. "Forget about shooting or lifting the bow, she was not able to do even simple daily chores," Atanu recalled. "Gradually, she started jogging and put in a lot of hard work at the gym to get going again."

But then came the flicker of hope. Deepika dominated the National Games in Goa last year, returning with two gold and one silver.

Subsequently, the 30-year-old excelled in the three-month long selection trials, even though her husband-cum-mentor Atanu failed to make the cut. —*PTI*

Indian archery, rowing teams 1st to check in at Paris

PARIS, 20 JULY

India's chef-de-mission for Paris Olympics, Gagan Narang on Saturday informed that archery and rowing contingents are first from the country to check in at the Games village and said the athletes are eager to begin their campaign at the sporting extravaganza.

While archery and rowing contingents checked in at Paris Games village on Friday, the Indian men's hockey team will arrive on Saturday from the Netherlands, where it was undergoing its final preparation.

He further stated the mood among the athletes is that of excitement and anticipation. "The mood is certainly upbeat. We have the Indian men's hockey team arriving on Saturday. Surely, I am reminded of my hay days at the Olympics as an athlete.

India's Korean archery coach Baek Woong Ki on Saturday said he would not continue after his contract expires on August 30, and lashed out at the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) for "poor and hasty administration". Woong Ki, who reached the French capital with the Indian team after overseeing its preparation in Marseille, said he "was removed from the Olympic coaching role at a critical time" and will now be flying back to India with his return ticket already booked.

The Paris Olympics will be held from 26 July to 11 August, and India will be represented by six archers. —*PTI*

24 IAF personnel at Paris, maiden female service athletes

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Twenty-four personnel from the armed forces, including ace javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and two women participants, are among the 117 Indian athletes who are set to test their mettle at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The presence of these two women athletes in the contingent, marks the maiden participation of female service athletes at the Olympics, the ministry of defence in a statement on Saturday. Chopra, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics gold medallist, is a subedar in the Indian Army. Twenty-four personnel from the armed forces are among the 117 Indian athletes who are all set to make the nation proud at the Paris Olympics, beginning 26 July, it said. Among these 24 athletes, 22 are men, including javelin thrower Subedar Neeraj Chopra, and two are women, it said. —*PTI*

Nadal advances in Bastad after 4-hour QFs

BASTAD, 20 JULY

Rafael Nadal advanced to his first semifinal in two years after a four-hour quarterfinal at the Nordea Open on Friday. Nadal fought past 36th-ranked Mariano Navone of Argentina 6-7(2) 7-5 7-5. Nadal led 5-2 in the deciding set. "I lost for some moments my concentration, but I was able to hold physically until the end," Nadal said in an on-court interview. "That is so important for me. Let's see how I am tomorrow, but today I am alive and in the semifinals." The 38-year-old Nadal is playing his first tournament since losing in the French Open first round, to prepare for the Paris Olympics on clay at Roland Garros. In his first semifinal since 2022 Wimbledon, Nadal will face Croatian qualifier Duje Ajdukovic on Saturday. —*AP*

India races into QFs in World Jr squash team event

HOUSTON, 20 JULY

India continued their fine run at the World Junior Squash Championships with both the boys' and girls' team winning their respective matches here. While the boys blanked Brazil 3-0 to top the three-team Group F, the girls beat Brazil and Australia by an identical 3-0 margin to assure themselves of a quarterfinal berth on Friday. The boys will now meet Canada in the pre-quarterfinals, while the girls face Hong Kong in their concluding Group D league match. —*PTI*

Jr men, women West hockey c'ships to begin today

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The second Hockey India Junior Men and Women West Zone Championship is set to take place from 21 to 28 July at Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh. The participating teams are divided into two pools in the women's category. Pool A consists of Madhya Pradesh, hosts Chhattisgarh, and Gujarat. Pool B includes Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Goa and Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu. The tournament will be played be in round-robin format with the top two teams from each pool advancing to the semifinals. The top two teams from the round-robin stage will advance to the final, while the third and fourth-placed teams will compete for the third position. —*PTI*

INDIA WOMEN EYE ASIA CUP SF

Indian Women's team PHOTO: X/@ACCMEDIA1

DAMBULLA, 20 JULY

Dominant India will be eager to perfect their tactics further while warding off United Arab Emirates which also can push them firmly towards the semifinals of the women's Asia Cup here on Sunday.

Defending champions India's supremacy was evident in their facile seven-wicket victory over arch-rivals Pakistan on Saturday, and the UAE will require a giant-sized miracle to stop Harmanpreet Kaur's side.

India currently have two points and a Net Run Rate of +2.29, and a win over the Emirates will take them to four points, which will also have a positive reflection on their NRR.

The Asia Cup also presents India with a wonderful opportunity to prepare for the T20 World Cup to be held in Bangladesh later this year. —*PTI*

Nayar, Doeschate may join India in SL as asst coaches

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Abhishek Nayar and Ryan ten Doeschate are set to join the support staff of newly-appointed head coach Gautam Gambhir during India's white ball tour to Sri Lanka, starting from 27 July.

Nayar, who has played three ODIs for India, and Doeschate, who was a hard-hitting all-rounder for Netherlands, have worked closely with Gambhir at the Kolkata Knight Riders and are likely to come in as assistant coaches, the PTI has learned. Doeschate is currently working with LA Knight Riders in the ongoing Major League Cricket (MLC) and Gambhir has openly expressed his admiration for the team-first attitude of the Dutchman.

Gambhir had suggested to BCCI the names of ex-India seamers R Vinay Kumar and L Balaji and ex-South African pacer Morne Morkel for the role of bowling coach. —*PTI*

ICC monitors B'desh unrest ahead of Women's T20 WC

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said it has been keeping a watch on the security situation in Bangladesh, the venue of the women's T20 World Cup later this October.

The Bangladesh Police imposed curfew and military forces patrolled Dhaka on Saturday after violence escalated in the capital and elsewhere over protests by students, demanding reforms of the quota system for government jobs.

"We have independent security monitoring across the world. So, yes, we are keeping a watch on it (the situation in Bangladesh)," an ICC Board member told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Australia are the most successful team in the women's T20 World Cup winning the tournament a record six times in 2010, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020 and 2023. England and the West Indies won the event once each, while India under Harmanpreet Kaur will look to grab their maiden title.

India are currently playing in the Women's Asia Cup in Dambulla, Sri Lanka, and pacer Renuka Singh had said the team was using the tournament as a preparation for the ICC showpiece. —*PTI*

PHOTO: BCCI

Marquez named Indian men's football team head coach

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Spaniard Manolo Marquez, currently in charge of Indian Super League (ISL) side FC Goa, was on Saturday named as the Indian men's football team head coach in place of the sacked Igor Stimac.

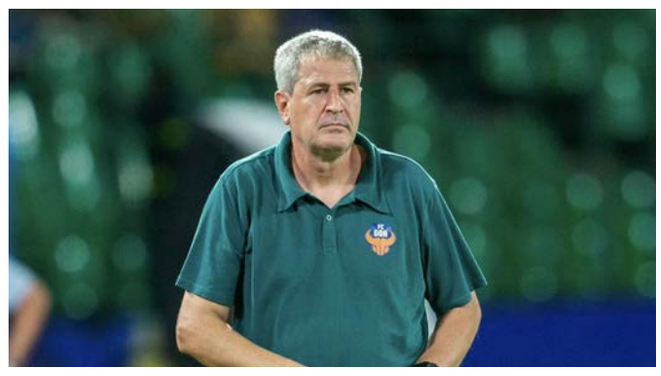
The All India Football Federation's (AIFF) executive committee, which met here on Saturday, appointed Marquez for the top job.

The AIFF said the 55-year-old Marquez will perform the dual role of managing the national team team as well as the ISL franchise in the 2024-25 season before taking up the India job on a full-time basis. "During the 2024-25 season, Marquez will continue his role as the head coach of first team at FC Goa, handling both responsibilities concurrently before assuming the national coaching role on a full-time basis."

The tenure of Marquez was not disclosed by the AIFF. Stimac was sacked as head coach on June 17, after the Indian team failed to make it to the third round of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers despite getting a relatively easy draw.

Marquez has been coaching in India since 2020. He has managed two ISL clubs so far. His first stint was with Hyderabad FC (2020-23), before he switched over to FC Goa (2023-present). He guided Hyderabad FC to the ISL Cup title in 2021-22. Overall, Marquez had an extensive coaching career in Spain. He was at the helm of affairs for La Liga side Las Palmas in 2017 and had also coached Spanish lower division clubs like Las Palmas B, Espanyol B, Badalona, Prat and Europa.

AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey said the federation, FC Goa and Marquez himself will collaborate closely to ensure that there is minimal impact between the two jobs -- as head coach of national team and the ISL side. —*PTI*



Spaniard Manolo Marquez PHOTO: X/@FCGOAOFFICIAL

Prabhakaran appointed Secy Gen

New Delhi, 20 July

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Saturday appointed Kerala's Anilkumar Prabhakaran as the sports body's secretary general, relieving M Satyanarayan of the responsibility after he took over on an interim basis following the sacking of Shaji Prabhakaran. The AIFF took this decision during its executive committee meeting on the recommendation of President Kalyan Chaubey. "The Executive Committee has also accepted the resignation of Anilkumar from the AIFF Executive Committee and all other sub-committees he was a part of. While removing Shaji from the post in November last year, Chaubey cited resentment about his functioning among state bodies as the reason for the move. —*PTI*

HUNGARIAN GP

McLaren pair clock fastest time for 3rd practice

BUDAPEST, 20 JULY

The Hungarian GP marks the start of the second half of the season PHOTO: X/@MCLARENF1

McLaren pair Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri topped the time charts of the third practice session for the Hungarian Grand Prix on Saturday.

Points leader Max Verstappen was third in his Red Bull, followed by Mercedes' George Russell.

Lewis Hamilton had a slip when he spun his Mercedes around in the middle of the track. He only managed the 10th-best time.

The Hungarian GP marks the start of the second half of the season. Qualifying is later on Saturday for Sunday's race.

Verstappen is trying to claim a fourth straight Formula One title. The Dutchman leads the driver's race with 255 points, with Norris in second with 171.

But, McLaren and Mercedes have closed the gap with Red Bull in recent races. Hamilton and Russell have won the last two races, while Norris has shown he has the speed to match Verstappen.

Norris also had the fastest car on Friday under extremely hot track conditions of 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit). Skies were overcast on Saturday and kept temperatures down at 40 C.

Ferrari is also trying to get over a recent dip in form after Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz won races early in the year.

Hamilton took the pole here last year while Russell did so in 2022. But, Verstappen went on to win both races, including overcoming a 10vth-place grid start two years ago.

- Mercedes have won the past two races at Austria and Silverstone, albeit Russell inherited the win at the Red Bull Ring following a crash between Norris and Verstappen. But Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin said he expected Hungary to be more of a challenge.

Verstappen said Red Bull had "a good day" with their upgrades. Only he used the revised bodywork and front and lower rear wing. Perez stayed on the previous-spec car all day.

The Mercedes drivers felt they were struggling for pace in the hot conditions, as they did in recent races in Spain and Austria.

However, Russell's 0.506-second deficit to Norris was explained by his tyres being too cold at the start of his lap, which cost him 0.3secs by the exit of Turn Two.

Mercedes have won the past two races at Austria and Silverstone, albeit Russell inherited the win at the Red Bull Ring following a crash between Norris and Verstappen.

But Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin said he expected Hungary to be more of a challenge.

At Ferrari, both Sainz and Leclerc were running a modified floor aimed at solving the aerodynamic problems caused by a previous upgrade. —*AP/ BBC News*

WI TAKE 41-RUN LEAD AGAINST ENG AFTER 1ST INNINGS

NOTTINGHAM, 20 JULY

A last-wicket stand of 71 gave the West Indies a handy lead in the second Test as England paid the price for their failure to wrap things up with the ball.

No. 11 and Shamar Joseph and Josh Da Silva put together a combination of smart batting and care-free hitting to give the tourists a 41-run lead. Joseph hit five fours and two sixes in his knock of 33 while Da Silva made a brilliantly judged 82 not out to usher his team to 457 all out.

That turned a bright start for England into a thoroughly underwhelming morning. Resuming 65 ahead with the score being 351-5, they had taken 4-35. Chris Woakes was responsible for three of those, getting the better of Jason Holder, Alzarri Joseph and Jayden Seales during a cagey session that brought out the best in the Warwickshire all-rounder. —*AP*